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XXII.

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"His Majesty received the Regent with his sweetest smile."

THE ROMANCES OF

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

II

THE CONSPIRATORS

Being Part of

THE CHEVALIER D'HARMENTAL

The Regency Romances

C.V. 2-3

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University of Oklahoma

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CONSPIRACY IS RENEWED.

D'HARMENTAL, after placing his hat and cloak on a chair, his pistols on his table, and his sword under his pillow, threw himself dressed on his bed; and more happy than Damocles, he slept, though, like Damocles, threatened by a sword which hung over his head by a thread.

When he awoke it was broad daylight, and as the evening before he had forgotten to close his shutters, the first thing he saw was a ray of sunshine playing joyously across his room, tracing from the window to the door a brilliant line of light in which floated a thousand atoms. D'Harmental thought that he had been dreaming when he found himself again calm and tranquil in his little room, so neat and clean, while he might have been at that hour in some gloomy and sombre prison. For a moment he doubted the reality, remembering what had happened the evening before; but everything was still there,—the red ribbon, the hat and cloak on the chair, the pistols on the table, and the sword under the pillow; and as a last proof, he himself was still there in the costume of the day before, which he had not taken off for fear of being surprised by some nocturnal visit.

D'Harmental jumped from his bed. His first look was for his neighbor's window; it was already open, and he saw Bathilde passing and repassing in her room. He gave his second look to his mirror, which told him that conspiracies agreed with him. Indeed, his face was paler

than usual, and therefore more interesting; his eyes were rather feverish, and therefore more expressive; so that it was evident that when he had smoothed his hair and arranged his collar and cravat he would be a most interesting person to Bathilde. D'Harmental did not say this, even to himself; but the bad instinct which always impels our poor souls to evil whispered these thoughts to him, — vaguely and incompletely, it is true, and yet with so much force that when he went to his toilet he suited his dress to the expression of his face; that is to say, he dressed himself entirely in black, his hair was arranged with a charming negligence, and he left his waistcoat more than usually open to give place to his shirt-frill, which was adjusted with a grace that was full of coquetry. All this was done without intention and in a preoccupied and careless manner; for D'Harmental, brave as he was, could not help remembering that at any minute he might be arrested; it was done by instinct, so that when the chevalier gave the last look in the glass before leaving his little dressing-room, he smiled at himself with a melancholy which doubled the charm of his countenance. There was no mistake as to the meaning of this smile, for he went directly to the window and opened it.

Perhaps Bathilde had also her projects for the moment when her neighbor should reappear. Perhaps she had arranged a defence which should consist in not looking toward him, or in closing her window after a simple recognition; but at the noise her neighbor's window made in opening, all was forgotten, and she ran to the window, crying out, "Ah, there you are! *Mon Dieu*, Monsieur, how anxious you have made me!"

is exclamation was ten times more than D'Harmen- l hoped for. If he, on his part, had prepared some rned and eloquent phrases, they were all forgotten,

and clasping his hands, "Bathilde! Bathilde!" he cried, "you are, then, as good as you are beautiful!"

"Why good?" asked Bathilde. "Did you not tell me that if I was an orphan, you also were without parents? Did you not say that I was your sister, and you were my brother?"

"Then, Bathilde, you prayed for me?"

"All night," replied the young girl, blushing.

"And I thanked chance for having saved me, when I owed all to an angel's prayers!"

"The danger is then past?" cried Bathilde, eagerly.

"The night was dark and gloomy," replied D'Harmental. "This morning, however, I was awakened by a ray of sunshine, which, however, a cloud may again conceal. So it is with the danger I have incurred; it has passed away to give place to a great happiness, — that of knowing you have thought of me; yet it may return. Ah," he continued, hearing steps on the staircase, "there it is, perhaps, coming to knock on my door."

At that moment, indeed, some one knocked three times on the chevalier's door.

"Who is there?" asked D'Harmental from the window, in a voice which, in spite of all his firmness, betrayed some emotion.

"A friend," answered a voice.

"Well?" asked Bathilde, with anxiety.

"Thanks to you, God still continues to protect me; it is a friend who knocks. Once again, thanks, Bathilde." And the chevalier closed his window, sending the young girl a last salute which was very like a kiss; then he opened the door to admit the Abbé Brigaud, who, beginning to be impatient, had knocked again.

"Well," said the abbé, on whose face it was impossible to see the smallest change, "what has happened, then

my dear pupil, that you are shut in thus by bolts and bars? Is it as a foretaste of the Bastille?"

"Halloa, Abbé!" said D'Harmental, jovially, as if to contend with the abbé in indifference to the dangers that surrounded them, "no jokes of that sort, I beg; they might bring misfortune."

"But look! look!" said Brigaud, looking around; "would not any one suppose that a conspirator lived here? Pistols on the table, a sword on the pillow, and a hat and cloak on the chair. Ah, my dear pupil, you are in disorder here, it appears to me. Come, put all this to rights, that I may not be able to perceive, when I make you my paternal visit, what is done here when I am not present."

D'Harmental obeyed, admiring in this man of the Church this *sang-froid* which he himself, a man of the sword, found it difficult to obtain.

"Very good," said Brigaud, watching him. "And this shoulder-knot which you have forgotten, and which was never made for you (for it dates from the time when you were in jackets), put it away too. Who knows? — you may want it."

"And what for, Abbé?" asked D'Harmental, laughing; "to wear at the regent's levee?"

"Oh, no, but for a signal to some good fellow who is passing. Come, put it away."

"My dear Abbé," said D'Harmental, "if you are not the Devil in person, you are at least one of his most intimate acquaintances."

"Oh, no! I am a poor fellow who goes his own quiet way, and who, as he goes, looks high and low, right and left, — that is all. Look, there is a ray of spring, the first, which knocks humbly at your window, and you do not open to it; one would suppose you were afraid of

being seen. Ah, pardon! I did not know that when your window is opened, another must close."

"My dear Abbé, you are full of wit," replied D'Harmental, "but terribly indiscreet; so much so, that if you were a musketeer instead of an abbé, I should seek a quarrel with you."

"A quarrel! And why the devil would you quarrel, my dear fellow? Because I wish to open you a path to glory, fortune, and perhaps love? Ah, that would be monstrous ingratitude!"

"Well, let us be friends, Abbé," said D'Harmental, offering his hand; "and I shall not be sorry to have some news."

"Of what?"

"How do I know? Of the Rue des Bons-Enfans, where there has been a great deal going on, I believe; of the Arsenal, where, I understand, Madame du Maine has given a soirée; and even of the regent, who, if I may trust a dream I had, came back to the Palais Royal very late and rather agitated."

"All has gone well. The disturbance in the Rue des Bons-Enfans, if there was one, has quite passed by, and the street is still this morning; Madame du Maine has as much gratitude for those whom important affairs kept away from the Arsenal as she has contempt, I am sure, for those who were there; finally, the regent, dreaming last night, as usual, that he was King of France, has already forgotten that he almost became a prisoner of the King of Spain. Now we must begin again."

"Ah, pardon, Abbé," said D'Harmental; "but, with your permission, it is the turn of the others. I shall not be sorry to rest a little myself."

"Ah, that goes badly with the news I bring you."

"What news?"

"It was decided last night that you should leave for Brittany this morning."

"For Brittany! And what to do there?"

"You will know when you are there."

"And if I do not wish to go?"

"You will reflect, and go just the same."

"And on what shall I reflect?"

"That it would be the act of a madman to interrupt an enterprise near its end for a love only at its beginning, — to abandon the interests of a princess of the blood to gain the good graces of a grisette."

"Abbé!" said D'Harmental.

"Oh, we must not get angry, my dear Chevalier; we must reason. You engaged voluntarily in the affair we have in hand, and you promised to aid us in it. Would it be loyal to abandon us now for a repulse? No, no, my dear pupil; you must have a little more connection in your ideas if you mix in a conspiracy."

"It is just because I have connection in my ideas," replied D'Harmental, "that this time, as at first, before undertaking anything new, I wish to know what it is. I offered myself to be the arm, it is true; but before striking, the arm must know what the head has decided. I risk my liberty; I risk my life; I risk something perhaps dearer to me still. I will risk all this in my own manner, with my eyes open, and not closed. Tell me first what I am to do in Brittany, and then — well, perhaps I will go."

"Your orders are that you should go to Rennes. There you will unseal this letter, and find your instructions."

"My orders! my instructions!"

"Are not these the terms which a general uses to his officers? And are they in the habit of disputing the commands they receive?"

"Not when they are in the service; but you know I am in it no longer."

"It is true. I forgot to tell you that you have re-entered it."

"I?"

"Yes, you. I have your commission in my pocket." And Brigaud drew from his pocket a parchment, which he presented to D'Harmental, who unfolded it slowly, questioning Brigaud with his looks.

"A commission!" cried the chevalier; "a commission as colonel in one of the four regiments of carabineers! Whence comes this commission?"

"Look at the signature, *pardieu!*"

"Louis-Auguste! Monsieur le Duc du Maine!"

"Well, what is there astonishing in that? As grand master of artillery, he has the disposal of twelve regiments. He gives you one of them to replace that which was taken from you, and as your general, he sends you on a mission. Is it customary for soldiers in such a case to refuse the honor their chief does them in thinking of them? I am a churchman, and do not know."

"No, no, my dear Abbé. It is, on the contrary, the duty of every officer of the king to obey his chief."

"Without considering," replied Brigaud, carelessly, "that in case the conspiracy failed, you would only have obeyed orders, and might throw the whole responsibility of your actions on another."

"Abbé!" cried D'Harmental a second time.

"Well, if you do not go, I shall make you feel the spur."

"Yes, I am going. Excuse me; but there are some moments when I am half mad. I am now at the orders of Monsieur du Maine, or rather of Madame. May I not see her before I go, to fall at her feet and tell her that I am ready to sacrifice my life at a word from her?"

"There, now you are going into the opposite extreme. But no, you must not die; you must live, — live to triumph over our enemies, and wear a beautiful uniform, with which you will turn all the women's heads."

"Oh, my dear Brigaud, there is but one I wish to please."

"Well, you shall please her first, and the others afterward."

"When must I go?"

"This instant."

"You will give me half an hour?"

"Not a second."

"But I have not breakfasted."

"You shall come and breakfast with me."

"I have only two or three thousand francs here, and that is not enough."

"You will find a year's pay in your carriage."

"And clothes?"

"Your trunks are full. Had I not your measure? You will not be discontented with my tailor."

"But at least, Abbé, tell me when I may return."

"In six weeks to a day, the Duchesse du Maine will expect you at Sceaux."

"But at least you will permit me to write a couple of lines."

"Well, I will not be too exacting."

The chevalier sat down and wrote, —

DEAR BATHILDE, — To-day it is more than a danger which threatens me; it is a misfortune which overtakes me. I am forced to leave this instant, without seeing you, without bidding you adieu. I shall be six weeks absent. In the name of Heaven, Bathilde, do not forget him who will not pass an hour without thinking of you!

RAOUL.

This letter written, folded, and sealed, the chevalier rose and went to the window; but as we have said, that of his neighbor was closed when Brigaud appeared. There was then no way of sending to Bathilde the despatch destined for her. D'Harmental made an impatient gesture. At this moment they heard a scratching at the door. The abbé opened it, and Mirza, who, guided by her instinct and her greediness, had found her way to the giver of the bonbons, appeared on the threshold and entered the room, making lively demonstrations of joy.

"Well," said Brigaud, "who shall say God is not good to lovers? You wanted a messenger, and here is one."

"Abbé, Abbé," said D'Harmental, shaking his head, "do not enter into my secrets before I wish it."

"Oh," replied Brigaud, "a confessor, you know, is an abyss."

"Then not a word will pass your lips?"

"On my honor, Chevalier."

D'Harmental tied the letter to Mirza's neck, and gave her a piece of sugar as a reward for the commission she was about to accomplish; and half sad at having lost his beautiful neighbor for six weeks, half glad at having regained his beautiful uniform, he took his money, put his pistols into his pockets, fastened on his sword, took his hat and cloak, and followed the Abbé Brigaud.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ORDER OF THE HONEY-BEE.

At the appointed day and hour, — that is to say, six weeks after his departure from the capital, and at four o'clock in the afternoon, — D'Harmental, returning from Brittany, entered the courtyard of the Palace of Sceaux, with his post-horses going at full gallop. Servants in full livery waited on the doorstep, and everything announced preparations for a fête. D'Harmental entered, crossed the hall, and found himself in a large room, where about twenty persons were assembled, standing in groups talking, while waiting for the mistress of the house.

There were, among others, the Comte de Laval, the Marquis de Pompadour, the poet Saint-Genest, the old Abbé de Chaulieu, Saint-Aulaire, Madame de Rohan, Madame de Croissy, Madame de Charost, and Madame de Brissac.

D'Harmental went straight to the Marquis de Pompadour, the member of this noble and intelligent assembly with whom he was best acquainted. They shook hands. Then D'Harmental, drawing him aside, said, "My dear Marquis, can you tell me how it is that where I expected to find only a dull political assembly I find preparations for a fête?"

"Faith, I know nothing about it, my dear Chevalier," replied Pompadour; "and I am as astonished as you are. I have just returned from Normandy myself."

"Ah! you also have just arrived?"

"This instant. I asked the same question of Laval; but he has just arrived from Switzerland, and knows no more than we do."

At this moment the Baron de Valef was announced.

"Ah, *pardieu!* now we shall know," continued Pompadour. "Valef is so intimate with the duchess he will be able to tell us."

Valef, recognizing them, came toward them. D'Harmental and Valef had not seen each other since the day of the duel with which this history opened, so that they met with pleasure; then after exchanging compliments, "My dear Valef," said D'Harmental, "can you tell me what is the meaning of this great assembly, when I expected to find only a select committee?"

"Faith, I know nothing about it," said Valef; "I have just come from Madrid."

"Every one has just arrived from somewhere," said Pompadour, laughing. "Ah, here is Malezieux! I hope he has been no farther than Dombes or Chatenay; and since, in any case, he must have returned by way of Madame du Maine's chamber, we shall have some news at last."

At these words Pompadour made a sign to Malezieux, but the worthy chancellor was so gallant that before obeying it he must acquit himself of his duty toward the ladies. After he had bowed to them, he came toward the group formed by Pompadour, D'Harmental, and Valef.

"Come, my dear Malezieux," said Pompadour, "we are waiting for you most impatiently. We have just arrived from the four quarters of the globe, it appears, — Valef from the south, D'Harmental from the west, Laval from the east, I from the north, you from I don't know where; so that we confess that we are very curious to know what we are expected to do here at Sceaux."

"You have come to assist at a great solemnity, — at the reception of a new knight of the Order of the Honey-Bee."

"*Peste!*" said D'Harmental, a little piqued that they should not have left him time to go to the Rue du Temps-Perdu before coming to Sceaux; "I understand now why Madame du Maine told us to be so exact to the rendezvous. As to myself, I am very grateful to her Highness."

"First of all, you must know, young man," interrupted Malezieux, "that there is no Madame du Maine nor Highness in the question. There is only the beautiful fairy Ludovise, the queen of the Bees, whom every one must obey blindly. Now, our queen is all-wise as well as all-powerful; and when you know who is the knight we are to receive, you will not regret your diligence."

"And who is it?" asked Valef, who, arriving from the greatest distance, was naturally the most anxious to know why he had been summoned home.

"His Excellency the Prince de Cellamare."

"Ah," said Pompadour, "I begin to understand."

"And I," said Valef.

"And I," said D'Harmental.

"Very well," said Malezieux, smiling; "and before the end of the evening you will understand still better; meanwhile, do not try to see further. It is not the first time you have entered with your eyes bandaged, is it, Monsieur d'Harmental?"

Malezieux then advanced toward a little man with a flat face, flowing hair, and a discontented expression, who seemed quite embarrassed at finding himself in so noble company, and whom D'Harmental saw then for the first time. He therefore asked Pompadour who that little man was. Pompadour replied that it was the poet

Lagrange-Chancel. The young men looked at the newcomer with a curiosity mixed with disgust; then turning away, and leaving Pompadour to advance toward the Cardinal de Polignac, who entered at this moment, they went into the embrasure of a window to talk over the occurrences of the evening.

The Order of the Honey-Bee had been founded by Madame du Maine, in allusion to the motto printed in Tasso's "Aminta," and which she had adopted on the occasion of her marriage, "Piccola si, ma fa puo gravi le ferite," — a motto which Malezieux, in the constancy of his poetical devotion to the granddaughter of the great Condé, had translated as follows: —

"The bee, though very small,
Can do great things.
Respect its fatal thrust;
Avoid its stings.
Flee, if you can, the darts
That in its body lie;
It stings and takes to wing, —
It is a cunning fly."

This order had, like others, its decorations, its officers, and its grand-master. The decoration was a medal, representing on one side a hive, and on the other the queen-bee; it was hung by a lemon-colored ribbon, and was worn by every knight whenever he came to Sceaux. The officers were Malezieux, Saint-Aulaire, the Abbé de Chaulieu, and Saint-Genest. Madame du Maine was grand-master.

It was composed of thirty-nine members, and could not exceed this number. The death of Monsieur de Nevers had left a vacancy, which was to be filled by the nomination of the Prince de Cellamare. The fact was that Madame du Maine had thought it safer to cover this

political meeting with a frivolous pretext, feeling sure that a fête in the gardens at Sceaux would appear less suspicious in the eyes of Dubois and Messire Voyer d'Argenson than an assembly at the Arsenal. And therefore, as will be seen, nothing had been forgotten to give its old splendor to the Order of the Honey-Bee.

At four o'clock precisely, the time fixed for the ceremony, the doors of the salon were opened, and in a gallery hung with crimson satin, which was spangled with silver bees, the beautiful fairy Ludovise appeared, seated on a throne raised on three steps. Her small stature and the delicacy of her features, even more than the golden wand in her hand, gave her the appearance of the aerial being whose name she had assumed. She made a gesture with her hand, and all her court, passing from the salon into the gallery, arranged themselves in a half-circle round her throne, on the steps of which the dignitaries of the order placed themselves.

When every one had taken his place, a side-door was opened, and Bessac, an ensign in the guards of Monsieur du Maine, entered, wearing the costume of a herald, — a cherry-colored robe, adorned with silver-bees, and a helmet in the form of a hive, — and announced in a loud voice, "His Excellency the Prince de Cellamare."

The prince entered, advanced gravely toward the queen of the Bees, bent one knee upon the first step of the throne, and waited.[1]

"Prince de Samarcand," said the herald, "give attentive ear to the rules of the order which the great fairy

[1] We need not inform our readers that these details are entirely historic, and that we neither invent nor imitate; they are copied as they stand, not from "Le Malade Imaginaire," nor from "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," but from "Les Divertissements de Sceaux."

Ludovise deigns to confer on you, and consider well what you are about to do."

The prince bowed, to indicate that he understood all the importance of the engagements he was about to undertake.

The herald continued: —

"*Article First.* You promise and swear inviolable fidelity and blind obedience to the perpetual dictatress of the incomparable Order of the Honey-Bee. Swear by the sacred Mount Hymettus."

At that moment music was heard issuing from a hidden source, and invisible musicians chanted: —

"Swear, nobleman of Samarcand;
Swear, worthy son of the Grand Khan."

"I swear it by the sacred Mount Hymettus," said the prince.

Then the choir responded, and the voices of all present joined with it in singing: —

"Il principe di Samarcand,
Il digno figlio del Gran' Khan,
Ha giurato:
Sia ricevuto."

After this refrain had been sung three times, the herald resumed: —

"*Article Second.* You promise and swear to be present at the enchanted palace of Sceaux, headquarters of the Order of the Honey-Bee, whenever there shall be a session of the chapter, — leaving all other affairs, and not seeking to be excused on any trivial pretext, such as gout, excess of phlegm, or Burgundy itch.[1]

[1] With all our researches we have been able to discover neither the cause nor the effect of this disease.

The choir sang : —

"Swear, prince of Samarcand;
Swear, worthy son of the Grand Khan."

"I swear it by the sacred Mount Hymettus," said the prince.

The herald continued : —

"*Article Third.* You promise and swear to learn all contra-dances of every kind, and to dance them on all occasions, especially on dog-days, and not to stop dancing, unless so ordered, till the perspiration comes through your clothes and foam stands on your lips."

"Swear, prince of Samarcand ;
Swear, worthy son of the Grand Khan."

"I swear it by the sacred Mount Hymettus."

"*Article Fourth.* You promise and swear to scale gallantly all hay-stacks, however high they may be, and not to be checked by fear of falls, however frightful."

"Swear, prince of Samarcand ;
Swear, worthy son of the Grand Khan."

"I swear it by the sacred Mount Hymettus."

"*Article Fifth.* You promise and swear to take under your protection honey-bees of every kind, to do no harm to any one of them, and bravely to allow them to sting you without brushing them away, whatever part of your person they may attack."

"Swear, prince of Samarcand ;
Swear, worthy son of the Grand Khan."

"I swear it by the sacred Mount Hymettus."

"*Article Sixth.* You promise and swear to respect the chief work of honey-bees, and following the example of

our grand dictatress, to hold in horror the profane use made of it by apothecaries, even though you should be bursting with repletion."

"Swear, prince of Samarcand;
Swear, worthy son of the Grand Khan."

"I swear it by the sacred Mount Hymettus."

"*Article Seventh and Last.* You promise and swear carefully to keep the glorious badge of your dignity, and never to appear before your dictatress without having on your side the medal with which she is about to honor you."

"Swear, prince of Samarcand;
Swear, worthy son of the Grand Khan."

"I swear it by the sacred Mount Hymettus."

As soon as this last vow was sworn to, all joined in singing: —

"Il principe di Samarcand,
Il digno figlio del Gran' Khan,
Ha giurato;
Sia ricevuto."

The fairy Ludovise then rose, and taking from the hands of Malezieux the medal, attached to a lemon-colored ribbon, she made a sign to the prince to approach, and repeated the following lines, the merit of which was enhanced by the significance of the situation: —

"Worthy envoy of a grand monarch,
Receive from me the glorious mark
Of the order promised you.
Thessandre, be informed by me
That, numbered now among my friends,
You are made a knight of the Honey-Bee."

The prince kneeled, and the fairy Ludovise passed the

ribbon around his neck. At the same moment all began to sing: —

"Viva semprè, viva, et in onore cresca
Il novo cavaliere della Mosca."

Two folding-doors were then thrown open, disclosing to view a magnificent supper, served in a hall splendidly illuminated.

The new knight of the Bee offered his hand to the dictatress, the fairy Ludovise, and they moved toward the supper-room, followed by the other guests. But at the door they were stopped by a beautiful child, in the guise of Love, who held in his hand a glass globe, containing a small roll of paper for every guest. It was a lottery of a novel kind, — a worthy sequel to the ceremony we have described.

Among the tickets in this lottery there were ten on which were written the words, "Song," "Madrigal," "Epigram," "Impromptu," etc. Those to whom these tickets fell were expected to acquit themselves of the obligations thus imposed on them during the repast. The rest were under no obligation except to applaud, to drink, and to eat.

On seeing this poetic lottery, the four ladies claimed exemption on the score of incompetency; but Madame du Maine declared that no one should be exempt. The ladies, however, were authorized to choose each a collaborator, who, in exchange, should be entitled to a kiss. It will be seen that nothing could be more pastoral.

That amendment to the law having been made, the fairy Ludovise first put her little hand into the glass globe and took from it a paper which she unrolled; it contained the word "Impromptu."

The others then drew; but whether by chance or by adroit contrivance the poetical tasks fell almost exclu-

sively to Chaulieu, Saint-Genest, Malezieux, Saint-Aulaire, and Lagrange-Chancel.

Madame de Croissy, Madame de Rohan, and Madame de Brissac drew the other lots and immediately chose for collaborators Malezieux, Saint-Genest, and the Abbé de Chaulieu, who thus found themselves burdened with a double task.

As to D'Harmental, he had drawn, to his great delight, a blank ticket, which, as we have said, limited his obligations to applauding, drinking, and eating.

This little operation being concluded, each person took the place at the table designated in advance by a card bearing his name.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE POETS OF THE REGENCY.

In justice to Madame la Duchesse du Maine it must be said that this famous lottery, which recalled the best days of the Hôtel Rambouillet, was not so ridiculous as to a superficial view it might appear. In the first place, trivial verses, sonnets, and epigrams were very much in fashion at that period, whose barrenness they faithfully reflected. That great flame of poetry kindled by Corneille and Racine was dying out, and its rays, which had lighted the world, had dwindled to a few feeble sparks, which shone in a social circle, ran through a dozen small assemblies, and then expired. And then there was still another motive for this competition, besides that of fashion. Five or six persons only were acquainted with the real purpose of the fête, and it was necessary to fill with trivial amusements the two hours of the repast.

During the early part of the banquet the guests were, as is usual, cold and silent; but presently arose the light, buzzing sound which is the prelude to a general conversation. The beautiful fairy Ludovise, preoccupied doubtless with the impromptu which the lottery had assigned to her, and unwilling to encourage the bad example of choosing a collaborator, was silent, and that silence naturally cast a shade of gloom upon the banquet.

Malezieux saw that it was time to pluck up the evil by the roots, and addressing himself to the Duchesse du Maine, "Beautiful fairy Ludovise," said he, "your sub-

jects complain bitterly of your silence, to which you have not accustomed them, and have charged me to bear their complaint to the foot of your throne."

"Alas," said the duchess, "you see, my dear Chancellor, I am like the crow in the fable, who wished to imitate the eagle and carry off a lamb. I am caught by my impromptu and am unable to free myself."

"Then," replied Malezieux, "permit me, for the first time, to anathematize the laws imposed by you. But you have so accustomed us, beautiful Princess, to the sound of your voice and the charm of your wit that we cannot get along without them.

"Each word that cometh from thee
Is as thrilling as words can be,—
A thousand ways sublime.
Pardon, Princess, if I choose
To sing thy praise in rhyme,
Who withhold'st from us thy prose."

"My dear Malezieux," cried the duchess, "I place your impromptu to my own account. And now my debt to the company is paid; I owe no one anything except a kiss to you."

"Bravo!" cried all the guests.

"And now, gentlemen," said the duchess, "from this moment, no more private conversation; each owes himself to all. Come, my Apollo," she continued, turning toward Saint-Aulaire, who was conversing in a low tone with Madame de Rohan, "we will begin our inquisition with you. Tell us aloud the secret you whispered just now to your beautiful neighbor."

It appeared that the secret was not of a kind to be repeated aloud; for Madame de Rohan blushed to the whites of her eyes, and made a sign to Saint-Aulaire to be silent. The latter reassured her by a gesture, and then

turning toward the duchess, to whom he owed a madrigal, "Madame," said he, replying in his turn, and at the same time acquitting himself of the obligation imposed by the lottery, —

"The goddess who pleases herself
By asking my secret from me,
If I were Apollo, would not be my muse;
Till the end of the day she Thetis would be."

This madrigal, which five years later would have made Saint-Aulaire a member of the Academy, had such success that for some moments no one dared to follow him, and after the applause had ceased, there was silence. The duchess broke the silence by reproaching Laval for not eating.

"You forget my jaw," said Laval, pointing to the bandage around his chin.

"We forget your wound!" replied Madame du Maine, — "a wound received in the defence of the country, and in the service of our illustrious father, Louis XIV.! You mistake, my dear Laval; it is the regent who has forgotten it."

"In any case," said Malezieux, "it seems to me, my dear Count, that a wound so well placed is a reason for pride rather than regret.

"Mars has struck thee with his thunder,
'Mid a thousand scenes of wonder,
Worthy of Laval's great name.
Still thou hast a throat for drinking;
That 's the main thing, to my thinking.
Be glad that organ 's still the same."

"Yes," said the Cardinal de Polignac, "but if the present weather continues, my dear Malezieux, Laval's throat runs great risk of not swallowing any wine this year."

"How is that?" asked Chaulieu, with anxiety.

"'How is that?' my dear Anacreon. Do you not know what is going on in the sky?"

"Alas," said Chaulieu, turning toward the duchess, "your Eminence is aware that I can no longer see the sky well enough to distinguish the stars; but I am only the more concerned for what happens there."

"It happens that my vine-dressers write me from Burgundy that everything is burned up by the sun, and that the approaching harvest is ruined if we remain a few days longer without rain."

"Do you hear, Chaulieu?" asked Madame du Maine, laughing. "They want rain, and you have such a horror of water! Do you hear what his Eminence says?"

"Oh, very true," said Chaulieu; "but there is a way to harmonize all wishes.

"Water is hateful to me, my dear;
I'm angry when it comes too near,
And shudder like a man deranged.
And yet, in spite of all my pain,
To-day I find my heart is changed, —
Our vines are crying out for rain.

"Heaven, give rain with generous hand;
Pour out water o'er the land,
Now, alas, dried up all over.
But when these rains shall come to pass,
I'll do my drinking under cover,
Lest some should fall into my glass."

"But we want no rain to-night!" cried the duchess. "It would derange the entertainment which our good De Launay is at this moment preparing in our gardens."

"Ah, that explains why our amiable prodigy is not with us," said Pompadour. "She is sacrificing herself for us, and we forget her! We are ungrateful. To her

health, Chaulieu!" And Pompadour raised his glass, — a movement immediately imitated by the sexagenarian lover of the future Madame de Staal.

"One moment! one moment!" cried Malezieux, holding out his empty glass to Saint-Genest. "*Peste!* don't leave me out!

"I maintain that a solid mind
Will no good in emptiness find.
As for me, I scorn and flout it,
And will fight it at every pass.
Since there may be some who doubt it,
Saint-Genest, fill up my glass."

Saint-Genest hastened to obey the request of the Chancellor of Dombes; but in replacing the bottle, either by accident or by design he upset a lamp, and put out the light. The duchess, who with watchful eyes observed everything that happened, rallied him on his awkwardness.

Doubtless that was precisely what the good abbé desired; for turning at once toward Madame du Maine, "Beautiful fairy," he said, "you do wrong to laugh at my awkwardness. What you take for stupidity is simply an act of homage to your beautiful eyes."

"And how is that, my dear Abbé? Homage paid to my eyes, do you say?"

"Yes, noble fairy," continued Saint-Genest; "I have said it, and I will prove it.

"My muse, severe and impolite,
Maintains that so much light at night
Is useless in the skies.
Since, when Aminta lifts her veil,
And shows the glory of her eyes,
All other light turns pale."

This madrigal, so elegantly turned, would doubtless have been rewarded by the applause which it deserved,

if at the very moment when Saint-Genest was uttering the last line, Madame du Maine, in spite of all her efforts to control herself, had not sneezed outrageously, — with so much noise that to Saint-Genest's great disappointment the conclusion of his stanza was lost to the greater portion of the listeners. But in that company of wit-hunters nothing could be lost. What was an annoyance to one was a help to another; and hardly had the duchess allowed that untimely sneeze to escape, when Malezieux, catching it on the wing, cried out, —

"Oh, now I am astounded
At the noise that just resounded
From the beautiful goddess!
Great indeed is the princess,
But small the nose that sounded,
And so I am astounded!"

This last impromptu was of so superior excellence that it imposed a moment's silence on the company before they could descend from the heights of poesy to the commonplaces of plain prose.

Meanwhile D'Harmental, availing himself of the freedom accorded by his blank lottery-ticket, had remained silent, or rather had exchanged with Valef, who sat next to him, a few words, and a few smiles half suppressed. As for the rest, as Madame du Maine had foreseen, notwithstanding the very natural preoccupation of some of the guests, the party as a whole had kept up such an appearance of frivolity that no one could have suspected that this appearance hid the secret windings of a conspiracy. And therefore, either by force of voluntary effort, or through satisfaction in seeing her ambitious projects progressing so favorably, the beautiful fairy Ludovise had presided at the banquet with wonderful presence of mind, grace, and gayety. And as we have seen,

Malezieux, Saint-Aulaire, Chaulieu, and Saint-Genest had seconded her to the best of their ability.

Meanwhile the time for leaving the table was approaching. They could hear, through the closed windows and the partly open doors, vague snatches of music which came in from the garden, intimating that a new order of entertainments awaited the guests. Madame du Maine announced that having expressed to Fontenelle, on the evening before, her intention to observe the rising of the planet Venus, she had received during the day an excellent telescope from the author of "Les Mondes," the use of which she offered to the company for making their astronomic studies of that beautiful star.

This announcement gave Malezieux so fine an opportunity to launch a madrigal that he could not fail to take advantage of it. Since Madame du Maine seemed to apprehend that Venus might have risen already, "Oh, beautiful fairy," said he, "you know better than any one else that on that score we have nothing to fear.

"For making observations
All things are in array;
When we leave the hall of feasting
We shall see Cytherea.
Yes, end that long repast,
Princess incomparable;
Venus will rise at last,
When you shall leave the table."

Thus Malezieux ended the *séance*, as he had opened it All were rising from the table in the midst of the ap plause, when Lagrange-Chancel, who had not said a word in the whole course of the repast, turned toward the duchess.

"Pardon, Madame," he said, "I also have a debt to pay; and although no one seems to demand that it be

paid, I am too conscientious a debtor not to discharge it."

"Oh, true, my Archilochus," replied the duchess; "have you not a sonnet for us?"

"By no means, Madame," replied Lagrange-Chancel. "Fate has reserved for me an ode; and fate is very wise, for I know myself that I have but little aptitude for all this poetry of the drawing-room which is so much in vogue at the present day. My muse, you know, Madame, is Nemesis, and my inspiration, instead of descending from heaven, rises up from hell. Be so kind, therefore, Madame la Duchesse, as to ask these ladies and gentlemen to bestow upon me for a moment that attention which since the beginning of the repast they have given to others."

Madame du Maine answered only by resuming her seat, and the others immediately followed her example. Then there was a moment's silence, during which the eyes of all the guests were fixed with some anxiety upon this man who himself avowed his muse to be a Fury, and Acheron his Hippocrene.

Then Lagrange-Chancel rose; his eye glowed with a threatening light, and a bitter smile curled his lip. With a hollow voice, which harmonized perfectly with the words which fell from his lips, he recited the following lines, which were destined eventually to be read in the Palais Royal, and to draw from the regent tears of indignation, witnessed by Saint-Simon:—

"You,[1] whose eloquent speech
Against two tyrants inhuman
Once bravely dared to teach
War to the Greek and the Roman,
Give me your power, that I may pierce
The armor of a beast more fierce.

[1] Demosthenes and Cicero.

I burn to go where you lead,
And will even make the attempt,
From all chilling fears exempt,
Charmed by your glorious deed.

"He had hardly opened his eyes
When — such as to-day he is shown —
He filled the air with his cries,
Because he was kept from the throne.
To those detestable ideas,
Sprung from the Circes and Medeas,[1]
His mind alone aspires,
Thinking by that infernal art
To bridge the chasm that apart
Keeps him from his desires.

"Ferryman beneath the earth,
Prepare thyself, without dismay,
To pass the shades of royal birth
Philippe begins to send thy way.
Oh, horrors, horrors still pursuing!
Oh, losses ever fresh accruing!
Mourned by tears that could not save.
So on a wide-flowing river,
Whose rapid course goes on forever,
Wave is followed still by wave.

"Thus the sons,[2] their father weeping,[3]
By the same hand are robbed of life;
The brothers side by side are sleeping;
The husband follows then the wife.[4]
Then — fatal blow, that brings the end! —
Two sons,[5] on whom our hopes depend,

[1] As may be remembered, the Duc d'Orléans was an excellent chemist. It was principally upon his studies with Humbert in that science that were based the calumnies to which the life of Louis XV. has done

[2] Duc de Bourgogne and the Duc de Berri.
[3] elder dauphin.
[4] sieur le Dauphin, and Madame la Dauphine.
[5] e sons of the young dauphin.

The sweeping scythe of Fate pursues.
The first of these has joined his race;
The other,[1] with a pallid face,
Awaits the call none can refuse.

"O King,[2] attended while alive
With incense and prosperity,
Thou wilt not see thyself revive
In thy three-branched posterity.
Thou know'st the author of this deed,
And the vile minister to his greed,[3]
Worthy a prince detested.
May both be buried in one grave!
Destroy their lives, and thou wilt save
The remnant of thy race molested.

"Pursue this coward[4] prince to death,
Already by his fears undone;
Let hatred curse his dying breath,
Who bears the scorn of every one.
Upon his head, weighed down by crimes,
Fall Mithridates' lot betimes
When pressed by Roman bands.
And in his last supreme despair
May he the fateful poison dare,
Prepared by his own hands!"

It is impossible to describe the effect produced by these lines, following as they did the impromptus of Malezieux, the madrigals of Saint-Aulaire, the songs of Chaulieu. All looked at one another in silence, and as if frightened at finding themselves for the first time face to face with those hideous calumnies which until then had lurked in obscurity, and had not ventured out into open daylight. The duchess herself, who had yielded the most

[1] Louis XV.
[2] Louis XIV.
[3] Humbert the chemist.
[4] It will not be forgotten that the allusion here is to the hero of Steenkirk, of Nerwinden, and Lérida.

credence to them, had turned pale on seeing that ode, that monstrous hydra, erect in her presence, its six heads filled with gall and venom. The Prince de Cellamare showed his embarrassment, and the Cardinal de Polignac's hand trembled visibly as he rumpled his lace band.

Thus the poet ended his last strophe in the midst of the same silence which had greeted the first. As Madame du Maine arose, embarrassed by the general reserve, which indicated disapprobation even among the most faithful, the others followed her example and went out with her into the gardens.

Upon the steps, D'Harmental, who went out last, accidentally jostled against Lagrange-Chancel, who was returning to the salon for a handkerchief which Madame du Maine had left behind her.

"Pardon, Monsieur le Chevalier," said the irritated poet, straightening himself up, and fixing on D'Harmental his two small eyes, yellow with bile, "would you trample upon me, perchance?"

"Yes, Monsieur," replied D'Harmental, looking upon him with contempt from all his height, as he would have looked upon a toad or a viper, — "yes, if I were sure of crushing you." And taking Valef's arm, he went down with him into the gardens.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE QUEEN OF THE GREENLANDERS.

As might have been anticipated from what was said during the banquet, and also from the kind of entertainments which Madame du Maine was wont to give at her country-house in Sceaux, the festivities to which we have introduced our readers were extended beyond the salons into the gardens, where new surprises awaited the guests.

These immense gardens, designed by Le Nôtre for Colbert, and sold by him to the Duc du Maine, had become, under the duchess's management, a veritable abode of fairies. Those large rectangular divisions characteristic of French gardens, with their green hedges, their broad avenues of lindens, their yews trimmed to shapes of spirals and pyramids, offered better facilities than the English gardens, with their little clumps of shrubbery, their winding avenues, and limited views, for the mythological fêtes which were in vogue under the great king. Those of Sceaux especially, bounded only by a large sheet of water, in the middle of which arose the pavilion of Aurora, — so called because from this pavilion was generally given the signal that night was ended and that it was time to retire, — had, with their tennis-courts and arenas for tournaments and games, an aspect of grandeur truly royal.

Every one was astonished, on going out upon the steps, to see all those fine trees and graceful hedges linked to-

gether by garlands of light, which changed the night into brilliant day. At the same time delicious music was heard issuing from an invisible source ; then to the sound of this music there was seen approaching through the wide avenue something so strange and unexpected that so soon as the real meaning of the affair was understood, shouts of laughter burst from every side. It was a game of gigantic ninepins which advanced slowly in the middle of the wide avenue, preceded by its nine and accompanied by its ball. When they had arrived within a short distance from the porch, the ninepins arranged themselves gracefully in the usual order, and after bowing before Madame du Maine, — while the ball kept on rolling to her very feet, — began to sing a sad complaint to the effect that until this day the game of ninepins, less fortunate than the games of roundabout, foot-ball, and tennis, had been exiled from the gardens of Sceaux, and to ask for a reform of this injustice and that this game should enjoy, in common with its fellow games, the privilege of amusing the noble guests of the beautiful fairy Ludovise. This lament was a cantata for nine voices, accompanied by viols and flutes, interspersed with bass solos sung by the ball with a most original effect. The demand it expressed was seconded by all the guests, and granted by Madame du Maine. Immediately, at a given signal, and as an expression of joy, the ninepins began a ballet, accompanied by so singular tossings of the head and so grotesque motions of the body that the success of the dancers surpassed even that of the singers, and Madame du Maine, in the pleasure she derived from the performance, expressed to the game of ninepins her regret at having neglected it so long, and her great pleasure in making its acquaintance, authorizing it from this time forth, in virtue of her power a queen of the Bees, to call itself the noble game of nine-

pins, that it might be no longer in any way inferior to its rival, — the noble game of goose.

As soon as this favor was granted, the pins gave place to new personages, who had just approached through the broad avenue. These personages, seven in number, were entirely covered with furs, which concealed their forms, and shaggy caps, which hid their faces; they walked slowly, having in their midst a sled drawn by two reindeer, which indicated that they were a deputation from the polar regions. In fact, it was an embassy which the people of Greenland had sent to the fairy Ludovise. This embassy was led by a chief wearing a long cloak lined with sable, and a fox-skin cap from which three tails were hanging, — one over each shoulder, and the third down the back. Approaching Madame du Maine, the chief bowed, and speaking for the deputation, —

"Madame," said he, "the Greenlanders having deliberated, in a general national assembly, upon sending one of their chief men to your Most Serene Highness, I have had the honor to be chosen to place myself at their head and to offer you, in their name, the sovereignty of their States."

The allusion was so evident, and yet so safe, that a murmur of approbation ran through the whole assembly, and a gracious smile touched the lips of the beautiful fairy Ludovise. The ambassador, visibly encouraged by this reception, continued, —

"Fame has told us, even in the midst of our snows, in our poor little corner of the world, of the charms, the virtues, and the inclinations of your Most Serene Highness. We know that you abhor the sun."

This allusion was as quickly seized on as the first, for the sun was the regent's device; and as we have said, Madame du Maine was well known for her predilection in favor of night.

"Consequently, Madame," continued the ambassador, "as in our geographical position God has blessed us with six months of night and six months of twilight, we come to propose to you to take refuge in our land from the sun which you so much dislike; and in recompense for that which you leave here, we offer you the title of Queen of the Greenlanders. We are certain that your presence will cause our arid plains to flower, and that the wisdom of your laws will conquer our stubborn spirit, and that, thanks to the gentleness of your reign, we shall renounce a liberty less sweet than your rule."

"But," said Madame du Maine, "it seems to me that the kingdom you offer me is rather distant; and I confess I do not like long voyages."

"We have anticipated your reply, Madame," replied the ambassador; "and thanks to the enchantments of a powerful magician, fearing that, more immovable than Mahomet, you might not wish to go to the mountain, we have arranged that the mountain should come to you. Holloa, genii of the Pole!" continued the chief, describing some cabalistic circles in the air with his wand, "disclose to all eyes the palace of your new sovereign."

At this moment fantastic music was heard; the veil which covered the pavilion of Aurora was raised as if by magic, and the water showed the reflection of a light so skilfully shed abroad that it might have been taken for that of the moon. By this light was seen, on an island of ice and at the foot of a snowy peak, the palace of the Queen of the Greenlanders, to which led a bridge so light that it seemed to be made of a floating cloud. Then, in the midst of general acclamation, the ambassador took from the hands of one of his suite a crown, which he placed on the duchess's head, and which she received with as haughty a gesture as though it had been a real crown.

Then, getting into the sledge, she went toward the marine palace; and while the guards prevented the crowd from following her into her new domain, she crossed the bridge and entered with the seven ambassadors. At the same instant the bridge disappeared, — as if, by an allusion not less transparent than those which had preceded, the skilful machinist had wished to separate the past from the future, — and fireworks expressed the joy of the Greenlanders at seeing their new sovereign.

Meanwhile Madame du Maine was introduced by an usher into the most retired part of the palace; and the seven ambassadors having thrown off caps and cloaks, she found herself surrounded by the Prince de Cellamare, Cardinal Polignac, the Marquis de Pompadour, the Comte de Laval, the Baron de Valef, the Chevalier d'Harmental, and Malezieux. As to the usher, who, after having carefully closed all the doors, came and mixed familiarly with all this noble assembly, he was no other than our old friend the Abbé Brigaud. Everything now began to appear in its real significance; and the fête, as the ambassadors had done, threw off mask and domino, and turned openly to conspiracy.

"Gentlemen," said the duchess, with her habitual vivacity, "we have not an instant to lose, as too long an absence would be suspicious. Let every one tell quickly what he has done, and we shall know then where we are."

"Pardon, Madame," said the prince; "but you have spoken to me, as of our party, of a man whom I do not see here, and whom I am distressed not to recognize among us."

"You mean the Duc de Richelieu?" replied Madame du Maine. "It is true he promised to come; he must have been detained by some adventure. We shall have to do without him."

"Yes, certainly," replied the prince, "if he does not come, we must do without him; but I confess that I deeply regret his absence. The regiment which he commands is at Bayonne, and for that reason might be very useful to us. Give orders, I beg, Madame, that if he comes he is to be admitted directly."

"Abbé," said Madame du Maine, turning to Brigaud, "you heard; tell D'Avranches."

The abbé went out to execute this order.

"Pardon, Monsieur," said D'Harmental to Malezieux; "but I thought six weeks ago that the Duc de Richelieu positively refused to be one of us."

"Yes," answered Malezieux, "because he knew that he was intended to take the blue ribbon to the Prince of the Asturias, and he would not quarrel with the regent just when he expected the Golden Fleece as the reward of that embassy. But since then the regent has changed his mind, and on account of the threatened difficulties with Spain has concluded to defer sending the order; so that the Duc de Richelieu, seeing his Golden Fleece put off till the Greek kalends, has come back to us."

"Your Highness's order has been transmitted to him whom it concerned," said the Abbé Brigaud, returning, "and if Monsieur le Duc de Richelieu appears at Sceaux, he will be conducted hither immediately."

"Well," said the duchess, "now let us go to business. Come, Laval, begin."

"I, Madame," said Laval, "as you know, have been in Switzerland, where, with the King of Spain's name and money, I raised a regiment in the Grisons. This regiment is ready to enter France at any moment, armed and equipped, and waits only the order to march."

"Very good, my dear Count," said the duchess; "and if you do not think it below a Montmorency to be colonel

of a regiment while waiting for something better, take the command of this one. It is a surer way of getting the Golden Fleece than taking the Saint Esprit into Spain."

"Madame," said Laval, "it is for you to appoint each one to the place you have reserved for him, and whatever you may appoint will be gratefully accepted by the most humble of your servants."

"And you, Pompadour," said Madame du Maine, thanking Laval by a gesture of the hand, "what have you done?"

"According to your Highness's instructions," replied the marquis, "I went to Normandy, where I procured the signing of the protest by the nobility. I bring you thirty-eight good signatures" (he drew a paper from his pocket). "Here is the request to the king, and here are the signatures."

The duchess snatched the paper so quickly that she almost tore it; and throwing her eyes rapidly over it, "Yes, yes," said she, "you have done well to put them so, without distinction or difference of rank, so that there may be no question of precedence. Guillaume-Alexandre de Vieux-Pont, Pierre-Anne-Marie de la Pailleterie, De Beaufremont, De Latour-Dupin, De Châtillon. Yes, you are right; these are the best and most faithful names in France. Thanks, Pompadour; you are a worthy messenger. Your skill shall not be forgotten. And you, Chevalier?" she continued, turning to D'Harmental with her irresistible smile.

"I, Madame," said the chevalier, "according to the orders of your Highness, left for Bretagne, and at Nantes I opened my despatches and became acquainted with my instructions."

"Well?" asked the duchess, quickly.

"Well, Madame," replied D'Harmental, "I have been

as successful as Messieurs de Laval and de Pompadour. I have the promises of Messieurs de Mont-Louis, de Bonamour, de Pont-Callet, and de Rohan-Soldue. As soon as Spain shows a squadron in sight of the coasts, all Bretagne will rise."

"You see, Prince!" cried the duchess, addressing Cellamare with an accent full of ambitious joy, "everything favors us."

"Yes," replied the prince; "but these four gentlemen, influential as they are, are not all that we must have. There are Laguerche-Saint-Amant, the Bois-Davys, De la Rochefoucault-Gondral, the Décourts, and the D'Érées, whom it would be important to gain."

"It is done, Prince," said D'Harmental; "here are their letters," and taking several from his pocket, he opened three of them at random, and read aloud declarations of allegiance and promises of support signed by Marquis Décourt, La Rochefoucault-Gondral, and Comte d'Érée.

"Well, Prince," cried Madame du Maine, "what do you think now? Besides these three letters, here is one from Lavauguyon, one from Bois-Davy, one from Fumée. Stay, Chevalier, here is our right hand, — it is that which holds the pen; let it be a pledge to you that from the day on which its signature will be a royal signature it will have nothing to refuse to you."

"Thanks, Madame," said D'Harmental, kissing her hand respectfully; "but you have already given me more than I deserve, and success itself will recompense me so highly, by placing your Highness in your proper position, that from that day I shall have nothing left to desire."

"And now, Valef, it is your turn," continued the duchess; "we kept you till the last, for you were the most important. If I understood rightly your signs

during dinner, you are not displeased with their Catholic Majesties."

"What would your Highness say to a letter written by his Majesty Philip himself?"

"Oh, it is more than I ever dared to hope for," cried Madame du Maine.

"Prince," said Valef, passing a paper to Cellamare, "you know his Majesty's writing. Assure her Royal Highness, who does not dare to believe it, that this letter is written entirely by his own hand."

"Entirely," said Cellamare, bowing; "entirely,—it is the truth."

"And to whom is it addressed?" asked Madame du Maine, taking it from the prince's hands.

"To King Louis XV., Madame," said Valef.

"Good!" said the duchess; "we will have it presented to his Majesty by the Maréchal de Villeroy. Let us see what he says." And she read as rapidly as the obscurity of the writing permitted:[1]—

THE ESCURIAL, March 16, 1718.

Since Providence has placed me on the throne of Spain, I have never for an instant lost sight of the obligations of my birth. Louis XIV., of eternal memory, is always present to my mind. I seem always to hear that great prince, at the moment of our separation, saying to me, "The Pyrenees exist no longer." Your Majesty is the only descendant of my elder brother, whose loss I feel daily. God has called you to the succession of that great monarchy, whose glory and interests will be precious to me till my death. I can never forget what I owe to your Majesty, to my country, and to the memory of my ancestors.

My dear Spaniards, who love me tenderly, and who are well assured of my love for them, are not jealous of the senti-

[1] This letter, which may be seen in the archives of foreign affairs, is actually in the handwriting of Philip V.

ments which I hold for you, and are well assured that our union is the base of public tranquillity. I flatter myself that my personal interests are still dear to a nation which has nourished me in its bosom, and that the generous nobility which has shed so much blood to support them will always look with love on a king who feels it an honor to be obliged to them, and to have been born among them.

"This is addressed to you, gentlemen," said the duchess, interrupting herself, and looking round her; then she continued, impatient to know the rest of the letter:—

What, then, can your faithful subjects think of a treaty signed against me, or rather against yourself?

Since your exhausted finances can no longer support the current expenses of peace, it is desired that you should unite with my most mortal enemy, and should make war on me if I do not consent to give up Sicily to the archduke. I will never subscribe to these conditions; they are insupportable to me.

I do not enter into the fatal consequences of this alliance. I only beg your Majesty to convoke immediately the States-General of your kingdom to deliberate on an affair of so great consequence.

"The States-General!" murmured the Cardinal de Polignac.

"Well, what does your Eminence say to the States-General?" interrupted Madame du Maine, impatiently. "Has this measure the misfortune not to meet with your approbation?"

"I neither blame nor approve, Madame," replied the cardinal; "I only remember that the same convocation was made during the League, and that Philip II. came off badly."

"Men and times are changed, Cardinal," replied the duchess. "We are not in 1594, but in 1718. Philip II.

was Flemish, and Philip V. is French. The same results cannot take place, since the causes are different." And she went on with the letter: —

I ask this in the name of the blood which unites us, in the name of the great king from whom we have our origin, in the name of your people and of mine. If ever there was a necessity to listen to the voice of the French nation, it is now. It is indispensable to learn from the nation itself what it thinks, — whether it wishes to declare war on us. As I am ready to expose my life to maintain its glory and interests, I hope that you will reply quickly to the propositions I make to you, that the convocation which I propose to you will prevent the unfortunate results which threaten us, and that the forces of Spain will be employed only to sustain the greatness of France, and to fight her enemies, as I shall never employ them but to show your Majesty the sincere regard and affection which I cherish toward you.

"What do you think of that, gentlemen? Could his Catholic Majesty do more for us?" asked Madame du Maine.

"He might have joined to this letter an epistle addressed directly to the States-General," answered the Cardinal de Polignac. "That epistle, if the king had deigned to send it, would have had a great influence on their deliberations."

"Here it is," said the Prince de Cellamare, taking a paper from his pocket.

"What, Prince!" cried the cardinal; "what do you say?"

"I say that his Catholic Majesty is of the same opinion as your Eminence, and has sent me this letter, which is the complement of the letter brought to us by the Baron de Valef."

"Then nothing is wanting!" cried Madame du Maine.

"We want Bayonne," said the Prince de Cellamare, shaking his head, — "Bayonne, the door of France."

At this moment D'Avranches entered, announcing the Duc de Richelieu.

"And now, Prince, there is nothing wanting," said the Marquis de Pompadour, laughing; "for here is he who has the key to the door."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DUC DE RICHELIEU.

"At last!" cried the duchess, seeing Richelieu enter. "Are you, then, always the same? Your friends cannot count on you any more than your mistresses."

"On the contrary, Madame," said Richelieu, approaching the duchess, and kissing her hand with an easy familiarity which indicated that in his eyes there was no difference of rank among women, "for to-day, more than ever, I prove to your Highness that I can reconcile everything."

"Then you have made a sacrifice for us, Duke?" said Madame du Maine, laughing.

"Ten thousand times greater than you can imagine. Whom do you think I have left?"

"Madame de Villars?" asked the duchess.

"Oh, no! better than that."

"Madame de Duras?"

"No."

"Madame de Nésle?"

"Bah!"

"Madame de Polignac? Ah, pardon, Cardinal!"

"Go on. It does not concern his Eminence."

"Madame de Soubise, Madame de Gabriant, Madame de Gacé?"

"No, no, no."

"Mademoiselle de Charolais?"

"I have not seen her since my last trip to the Bastille."

"Madame de Berri?"

"You know well that since Riom has taken to beating her she is madly in love with him."

"Mademoiselle de Valois?"

"Oh, I intend her for my wife when we have succeeded, and I am a Spanish prince. No, Madame; I have left for your Highness the two most charming grisettes —"

"Grisettes! Ah, fie!" cried the duchess, with an indescribable disdain; "I did not think that you descended to such creatures."

"Creatures! Two charming women, — Madame Michelin and Madame Rénaud. Do you not know them? Madame Michelin, a beautiful blonde; her husband is a carpet manufacturer; I recommend him to you, Duchess. Madame Rénaud, an adorable brunette, with blue eyes and black lashes, and whose husband is — I don't remember just what —"

"What Monsieur Michelin is probably," said Pompadour, laughing.

"Pardon, Monsieur le Duc," replied Madame du Maine, who had lost all curiosity concerning Richelieu's love adventures as soon as it appeared that they were outside a certain social circle, "may I venture to remind you that we met here on important business?"

"Oh, yes! we are conspiring, are we not?"

"Had you forgotten it?"

"Faith! a conspiracy is not one of the gayest things in the world, therefore I forget whenever I can that I am conspiring; but that is nothing, — whenever it is necessary I can come back to it. Now let us see; now does the conspiracy go on?"

Here, Duke, look at these letters, and you will know uch as we do."

"Oh, your Highness must excuse me," said Richelieu; "but really I do not read even those which are addressed to me, and I have seven or eight hundred in the most charming styles of penmanship, which I am keeping to amuse my old days. Here, Malezieux, you who are clearness itself, give me a report."

"Well, these letters are the engagements of the Bretagne nobles to sustain the rights of her Highness."

"Very good."

"This paper is the protest of the nobility."

"Oh, give it to me! I protest."

"But you do not know against what."

"Never mind; I protest all the same." And taking the paper, he wrote his name after that of Guillaume-Antoine de Chastellux, which was the last signature.

"Let him alone, Madame," said Cellamare to the duchess; "Richelieu's name is useful everywhere."

"And this letter?" asked the duke, pointing to the missive of Philip V.

"That letter," continued Malezieux, "is written by King Philip himself."

"Then his Catholic Majesty writes worse than I do," answered Richelieu. "That pleases me; Raffé always says it is impossible."

"If the letter is badly written, the news it contains is none the less good," said Madame du Maine, "for it is a letter begging the King of France to assemble the States-General to oppose the treaty of the quadruple alliance."

"And is your Highness sure of the States-General?"

"Here is the protest which pledges the nobility. The cardinal answers for the clergy, and there remains only the army."

"The army," said Laval, "is my affair. I have the signatures of twenty-two colonels."

"First," said Richelieu, "I answer for my regiment, which is at Bayonne, and which consequently is able to be of great service to us."

"Yes," said Cellamare, "and we reckon on it; but I heard that there was a question of changing the garrison."

"Seriously?"

"Very seriously. You understand, Duke? We must be beforehand."

"Of course! We must act at once. Give me paper and ink; I will write to the Duc de Berwick. At the moment of commencing a campaign, no one will be astonished at my begging not to be removed from the theatre of war."

The duchess hastened to give Richelieu what he asked, and taking a pen, presented it to him herself. The duke bowed, took the pen, and wrote the following letter: —

MONSIEUR LE DUC DE BERWICK, PEER AND MARSHAL OF FRANCE,[1] — As my regiment, Monsieur, is liable at any time to be moved, and as new regimentals have just been ordered for it, which it must entirely lose if before they are finished it should be obliged to make any movement, I have the honor to beg, Monsieur, that you will be pleased to allow it to remain at Bayonne until the beginning of May, when the regimentals will be completed. And I beg you to believe me, with all possible consideration, Monsieur,

Your very humble and obedient servant,

DUC DE RICHELIEU.

"Now read, Madame," continued the duke, passing the paper to Madame du Maine. "After that precaution the regiment will not stir from Bayonne."

The duchess took the letter, read it, and passed it to

[1] The Duc de Berwick had been appointed lieutenant-general of the king's armies, in case war should break out, and had accepted, although Philip V. had named him grandee of Spain, duke and chevalier of the Golden Fleece.

her neighbor, who passed it on, so that it made the round of the table. Malezieux, who had it last, could not repress a slight smile.

"Ah, Monsieur le Poëte," said Richelieu, "you are laughing; I suppose I have had the misfortune to offend that ridiculous prude called orthography. You know I am a gentleman, and they forgot to teach me French, thinking, I suppose, that for fifteen hundred francs a year I could always have a *valet-de-chambre*, who would write my letters and make my verses. This will not prevent me, my dear Malezieux, from being in the Academy, not only before you, but before Voltaire."

"In which case, will your *valet-de-chambre* write your discourse?"

"He is working at it; and you will see that it will not be worse than those that some academicians of my acquaintance have written themselves."

"Monsieur le Duc," said Madame du Maine, "it will doubtless be a curious thing to see your reception into the illustrious body of which you speak, and I promise you to employ myself from and after to-morrow in procuring a seat for that day; but this evening we are occupied with other things."

"Well," said Richelieu, "speak; I listen. What have you resolved?"

"To obtain from the king, by means of these two letters, the convocation of the States-General; then, sure as we are of the three orders, we depose the regent, and name Philip V. in his place."

"And as Philip V. cannot leave Madrid, he gives us full powers, and we govern France in his stead. Well, it is not badly arranged, all that; but to convoke the States General you must have an order from the king."

"The king will sign it."

"Without the regent's knowledge?"

"Without the regent's knowledge."

"Then you have promised the Bishop of Fréjus to make him a cardinal."

"No; but I will promise Villeroy a title and the Golden Fleece."

"I am afraid, Madame," said the Prince de Cellamare, "that all this will not determine the marshal to assume so grave a responsibility."

"It is not the marshal we want; it is his wife."

"Ah! you remind me," said Richelieu; "I undertake it."

"You!" said the duchess, with astonishment.

"Yes, Madame," replied Richelieu, "you have your correspondence; I have mine. I have seen seven or eight letters that your Highness has received to-day. Will your Highness have the goodness to look at one I received yesterday?"

"Is this letter for me only, or may it be read aloud?"

"We are among persons who are discreet, are we not?" said Richelieu, looking round him.

"I think so," replied the duchess; "besides, the gravity of the situation —"

The duchess took the letter, and read: —

MONSIEUR LE DUC, — I am a woman of my word. My husband is on the eve of setting out for the little journey you know of. To-morrow, at eleven o'clock, I shall be at home for you only. Do not think that I decide on this step without having put all the blame on the shoulders of Monsieur de Villeroy. I begin to fear for him, as you may have undertaken to punish him. Come, then, at the appointed hour, to prove to me that I am not too much to blame in conspiring with you against my lord and master.

Ah! pardon; that is not the one I intended to show

you; that is the one of the day before yesterday. Here is yesterday's."

The Duchesse du Maine took the second letter, and read as follows: —

MY DEAR ARMAND, —

"Is this the right one, or are you mistaken again?" said the duchess to Richelieu.

"No, no; this time it is right."

The duchess went on: —

MY DEAR ARMAND, — You are a dangerous advocate when you plead against Monsieur de Villeroy. I need to exaggerate your talents to diminish my weakness. You had, in my heart, a judge interested in your gaining your cause. Come to-morrow to plead again, and I will give you an audience.

"And have you been there?"

"Certainly, Madame."

"And the duchess?"

"Will do, I hope, all we desire; and as she makes her husband do whatever she likes, we shall have our order for the convocation of the States-General on his return."

"And when will he return?"

"In a week."

"And can you be faithful all that time?"

"Madame, when I have undertaken a cause, I am capable of the greatest sacrifices to forward it."

"Then we may count on your word?"

"I pledge myself."

"You hear, gentlemen?" said the Duchesse du Maine. "Let us continue to work, each in his own sphere. You, Laval, act on the army. You, Pompadour, on the nobility. You, Cardinal, on the clergy; and we will leave the Duc de Richelieu to act on Madame de Villeroy."

"And for what day is our next meeting fixed?" asked Cellamare.

"All depends on circumstances, Prince," replied the duchess. "At any rate, if I have not time to give you notice, I will send for you by the same carriage and the same coachman who took you to the Arsenal the first time you came there." Then turning toward Richelieu, "You give us the rest of the evening, Duke?"

"I ask your pardon," replied Richelieu; "but it is absolutely impossible. I am expected in the Rue des Bons-Enfans."

"What! have you resumed relations with Madame de Sabran?"

"They were never broken, Madame."

"Take care, Duke; that looks like constancy."

"No, Madame; it is calculation."

"Ah! I see that you are in the way to become devoted."

"I never do things by halves, Madame."

"Well, we will follow your example, Monsieur le Duc. And now, gentlemen, we have been here an hour and a half, and we should, I think, return to the gardens, that our absence may not be too much noticed. Besides, I think the Goddess of Night is on the shore, waiting to thank us for the preference we have given her over the sun, and it would not be polite to keep her waiting."

"With your permission, however, Madame," said Laval, "I must detain you a moment to submit to you the embarrassment in which I am placed."

"Speak, Count," replied the duchess; "to what does it relate?"

"It relates to our requests, our protests, our memorials. as agreed, if you remember, that they should be ed by workmen who could not read."

Well?"

"I bought a press, and established it in the cellar of a house behind the Val-de-Grâce. I enlisted the necessary workmen, and up to the present time have had the most satisfactory results; but the noise of our machine has given rise to the suspicion that we were coining false money, and yesterday the police made a descent on the house. Fortunately there was time to stop the work and roll a bed over the trap, so that they discovered nothing. But as the visit might be renewed, and with a less fortunate result, as soon as they were gone, I dismissed the workmen, buried the press, and had all the proofs taken to my own house."

"And you did well, Count," cried the Cardinal de Polignac.

"But what are we to do now?" asked Madame du Maine.

"Have the press taken to my house," said Pompadour.

"Or mine," said Valef.

"No, no," said Malezieux; "a press is too dangerous a means. One of the police may easily slip in among the workmen, and all will be lost. Besides, there cannot be much left to print."

"The greater part is done," said Laval.

"Well," continued Malezieux, "my advice is, as before, to employ some intelligent copyist, whose silence we can buy."

"Yes, this will be much safer," said Polignac.

"But where can we find such a man?" said the prince. "It is not an affair on which we can employ the first comer."

"If I dared —" said the Abbé Brigaud.

"Dare, Abbé, dare!" said the duchess.

"I should say that I know the man you want."

"Did I not tell you," said Pompadour, "that the abbé is a valuable man?"

"But is he really what we want?" said Polignac.

"Oh, if your Eminence had him made on purpose he could not do better," said Brigaud. "A true machine, who will write everything and read nothing."

"But as a still greater precaution," said the prince, "we might put the most important papers into Spanish."

"Then, Prince," said Brigaud, "I will send him to you."

"No, no!" said Cellamare; "he must not set his foot within the Spanish embassy. It must be done through some third party."

"Yes, yes! we will arrange all that," said the duchess. "The man is found, — that is the principal thing. You answer for him, Brigaud?"

"I do, Madame."

"That is all we require. And now there is nothing to keep us any longer," continued the duchess. "Monsieur d'Harmental, give me your arm, I beg."

The chevalier hastened to obey Madame du Maine, who seized this opportunity to express her gratitude for the courage he had shown in the Rue des Bons-Enfans, and his skill in Brittany. At the door of the pavilion, the Greenland envoys — now dressed simply as guests — found a little galley waiting to take them to the shore. Madame du Maine entered first, seating D'Harmental by her, leaving Malezieux to do the honors to Cellamare and Richelieu.

As the duchess had said, the Goddess of Night, dressed in black gauze spangled with golden stars, was waiting on the other side of the lake, accompanied by the twelve Hours; and as soon as the duchess was near enough to hear them, they began to sing a cantata appropriate to the subject. The cantata opened with a chorus of four verses, to which succeeded a solo, followed

by a second chorus, and all in so exquisite taste that every one turned toward Malezieux, the director of the entertainment, to congratulate him on his success. At the first notes of the solo D'Harmental started, for the voice of the singer had so strong a resemblance to another voice, well known to him and dear to his recollection, that — however improbable was Bathilde's presence at Sceaux — he rose involuntarily to look for the person whose accents had so singularly moved him. Unfortunately, in spite of the torches which the Hours, her subjects, held, he could not distinguish the goddess's features, which were covered with a long veil, similar to her dress. He could only hear that pure, flexible, sonorous voice rise and fall with that free, well-trained, and facile utterance which he had so much admired when he heard it for the first time in the Rue du Temps-Perdu; and every tone of that voice, becoming more distinct as he approached the shore, penetrated to the bottom of his heart, and made him tremble from head to foot. At length the solo ceased, and the chorus resumed, but D'Harmental, still standing, and insensible to all other thoughts, continued to follow in remembrance the voice that had ceased and the notes that were no longer heard.

"Well, Monsieur d'Harmental," said the duchess, "are you so accessible to the charms of music that you forget that you are my cavalier?"

"Oh, pardon, Madame!" said D'Harmental, leaping to the shore, and holding out his hand to the duchess; "but I thought I recognized that voice, and I confess it brought to me memories so powerful —"

"That proves that you are an *habitué* of the opera, my dear Chevalier, and that you appreciate, as it deserves, Mademoiselle Bury's talent."

"What! is that voice Mademoiselle Bury's?" asked D'Harmental, with astonishment.

"It is, Monsieur; and if you do not believe me," replied the duchess, in a tone which betrayed a degree of displeasure, "permit me to take Laval's arm or Pompadour's, that you may go and assure yourself of it."

"Oh, Madame," said D'Harmental, respectfully retaining the hand she was about to withdraw, "pray excuse me. We are in the gardens of Armida, and a moment of error may be permitted among so many enchantments;" and presenting his arm again to the duchess, he conducted her toward the château.

At this instant a feeble cry was heard, and feeble as it was, it reached D'Harmental's heart, and he turned involuntarily.

"What is it?" asked the duchess, with an uneasiness mixed with impatience.

"Nothing, nothing," said Richelieu; "it is little Bury, who has the vapors. Make yourself easy, Madame. I know the disease; it is not dangerous. If you particularly wish it, I will even go to-morrow to learn how she is."

Two hours after this little accident — which was not sufficient to disturb the fête in any way — D'Harmental was brought back to Paris by the Abbé Brigaud, and reentered his little attic in the Rue du Temps-Perdu, from which he had been absent six weeks.

CHAPTER XXVII.

JEALOUSY.

THE first sensation D'Harmental experienced on returning was one of inexpressible satisfaction at finding himself again in that little room so filled with recollections. Though he had been absent from it six weeks, one might have supposed that he had left it only the day before, since, thanks to the almost maternal care of Madame Denis, everything was in its accustomed place. D'Harmental remained an instant, his candle in his hand, looking around him with a look almost of ecstasy. All the other impressions of his life were effaced by those which he had experienced in this little corner of the world. Then he ran to the window, opened it, and threw an indescribable look of love toward the darkened windows of his neighbor. Doubtless Bathilde slept the sleep of an angel, unaware that D'Harmental was there trembling with love and hope.

He remained thus for more than half an hour, breathing with full respirations the air of night, which had never seemed to him so pure and fresh, and gazing alternately at Bathilde's window and at the sky. Only then did he comprehend to what degree Bathilde had become a necessity of his life, and how deep and strong was his love for her.

At length, however, D'Harmental reflected that he could not spend the entire night at his window, and closing it, he went back into his room, — still to trace

the recollections which his return to that little chamber had awakened in his heart. He opened his piano, and passed his fingers over the keys, at the risk of again arousing the anger of the lodger on the third floor. From the piano he passed to the unfinished portrait of Bathilde. There were still the beautiful and pure young girl and Mirza's wild and whimsical head. At length, after pausing for a last time before every object, he lay down and addressed himself to sleep, dwelling still in memory on the solo sung by Mademoiselle Bury, whom at last, in that vague twilight of thought which precedes complete extinction, he fully identified with Bathilde.

When he awoke, D'Harmental jumped from his bed and ran to the window. The day appeared already advanced, and the sun was shining brilliantly; yet Bathilde's window remained hermetically closed. The chevalier looked at his watch; it was ten o'clock, and he began to dress. We have already admitted that he was not free from a certain almost feminine coquetry; but this was the fault of the time, when affectation entered into everything, even passion. But this time it was not a melancholy expression on which he reckoned. The joy of return had given to his face a charming expression of happiness, and it was evident that a glance from Bathilde would crown him king of the creation. This glance he came to the window to seek, but Bathilde's remained closed. D'Harmental opened his, hoping that the noise would attract her attention; nothing stirred. He remained there an hour; during this hour there was not even a breath of wind to move the curtains; it seemed as if the young girl's room had been abandoned. He coughed, opened and closed the window, detached little pieces of plaster from the wall, and threw them against the panes, — all in vain.

To surprise succeeded uneasiness; this window so obstinately closed must indicate absence, if not misfortune. Bathilde absent! Where could she be? What had happened to disturb her calm, regular life? Where could he seek information? No one but Madame Denis could know. It was quite natural that D'Harmental should pay a visit to his landlady on his return, and he accordingly went down. Madame Denis had not seen him since the day of the breakfast. She had not forgotten his attention when she fainted. She received him therefore like the prodigal son.

Fortunately for D'Harmental, the young ladies were occupied with a drawing-lesson, and Boniface was at his office, so that he saw no one but his hostess. The conversation fell naturally on the order and neatness of his room during his absence; from this the transition was easy to the question if the opposite lodging had changed tenants. Madame Denis replied that she had seen Bathilde at the window the morning before; and that in the evening her son had met Buvat returning from his office, but had noticed in him a singular air of pride and hauteur.

This was all D'Harmental wished to know. Bathilde was in Paris and at home; chance had not yet directed her looks toward that window so long closed, and that room so long empty. He took leave of Madame Denis with an effusion of gratitude which she was far from attributing to its true cause.

On the landing D'Harmental met the Abbé Brigaud, who was coming to pay his daily visit to Madame Denis. The abbé asked if he was going home, and promised to pay him a visit. On entering his room, D'Harmental went straight to the window. Nothing was changed in regard to his neighbor; her curtains were still scrupulously closed. Decidedly this reserve was intentional. D'Har-

mental resolved to employ the last means which he had reserved. He sat down to the piano, and after a brilliant prelude sang the air of the cantata of "Night" which he had heard the evening before, and of which he had retained every note in his memory. Meanwhile he did not lose sight for an instant of the inexorable window; but there was no sign. The opposite room had no echo.

But failing of the result which he intended, D'Harmental had produced an effect which he did not intend. Hearing applause, he turned round, and saw the Abbé Brigaud behind him. "Ah, it is you, Abbé!" said he, rising and going quickly to close the window; "I did not know that you were so great a lover of music."

"Nor I that you were so good a musician. *Peste!* my dear pupil; an air you heard only once! It is wonderful!'

"I thought it very beautiful, Abbé; and as I have a very good memory for sounds, I retained it."

"And then it was so admirably sung; was it not?"

"Yes," said D'Harmental; "Mademoiselle Bury has an exquisite voice, and the first time she sings I shall go incognito to the opera."

"Is it that voice you want to hear?" asked Brigaud.

"Yes."

"You need not go to the opera for that."

"And where must I go?"

"Nowhere. Stay here. You are in the boxes."

"What! The Goddess of Night —"

"Is your neighbor."

"Bathilde!" cried D'Harmental. "Then I was not deceived; I recognized her. But it is impossible! How could she have been there?"

"First of all," said the abbé, "nothing is impossible in these times; remember that, before you deny or undertake

anything. Believe that everything is possible; it is the way to succeed in everything."

"But Bathilde?"

"Yes; does it not appear strange at first view? Well, nothing is more simple. But it does not interest you, Chevalier; let us talk of something else."

"Yes, yes, Abbé! you are strangely mistaken; I am deeply interested."

"Well, my dear pupil, since you are so curious, this is the whole affair. The Abbé de Chaulieu knows Mademoiselle Bathilde; is not that your neighbor's name?"

"Yes. How does the Abbé de Chaulieu know her?"

"Oh, very naturally. The guardian of this charming child is, as you know, or do not know, one of the best writers and copyists in the capital. The Abbé de Chaulieu wants some one to copy his poetry, since, being blind, he is obliged to dictate in the first instance to a little lackey who cannot spell; and he has confided this important task to Buvat. By this means he has become acquainted with Mademoiselle Bathilde."

"But all this does not explain how Mademoiselle Bathilde came to Sceaux."

"Stop; every history has its beginning, its middle, and its termination."

"Abbé, you will make me swear."

"Patience, patience!"

"Go on; I listen to you."

"Well, having made Mademoiselle Bathilde's acquaintance, the Abbé de Chaulieu, like the rest, has felt the influence of her charms; for you know there is a sort of magic attached to the young person in question, and that no one can see her without loving her."

"I know it," murmured D'Harmental.

"Then, as Mademoiselle Bathilde is full of talent, and

not only sings like a nightingale, but draws like an angel, Chaulieu spoke of her so enthusiastically to Mademoiselle de Launay that she thought of employing her for the costumes of the different personages in the fête."

"All this does not tell me that it was Bathilde and not Mademoiselle Bury who sang last night."

"We are coming to it."

"Well?"

"It happened that Mademoiselle de Launay, like the rest of the world, took a violent fancy to the little magician. Instead of sending her away after the costumes were designed, she kept her three days at Sceaux. She was still there day before yesterday, closeted with Mademoiselle de Launay, when some one entered with a bewildered air to announce to your Bat that the director of the opera wished to speak to her on a matter of importance. Mademoiselle de Launay went out, leaving Bathilde alone. Bathilde, to amuse herself, went to the piano, and finding both the instrument and her voice in good order, began to sing a grand air from some opera, and with such perfection that Mademoiselle de Launay, returning and hearing this unexpected song, opened the door softly, listened to the air, and threw her arms round the beautiful singer's neck, crying out that she could save her life. Bathilde, astonished, asked in what manner she could render her so great a service. Then Mademoiselle de Launay told her that she had engaged Mademoiselle Bury of the opera to sing the cantata of 'Night' on the succeeding evening, and she had fallen ill and sent to say that to her great regret her royal Highness the Duchesse du Maine could not rely upon her; so that there would be no 'Night,' and consequently no fête, if Bathilde would not have the extreme goodness to undertake the aforesaid cantata.

"Bathilde, as you may suppose, defended herself with

all her might, and declared that it was impossible that she should thus sing music which she did not know. Mademoiselle de Launay put the cantata before her. Bathilde said that the music seemed terribly difficult. Mademoiselle de Launay answered that for a musician of Bathilde's powers nothing was difficult. Bathilde got up. Mademoiselle de Launay made her sit down again. Bathilde clasped her hands. Mademoiselle de Launay unclasped them and placed them on the piano. The piano, being touched, gave out a sound. Bathilde, in spite of herself, played the first bar, then the second, then the whole cantata. Then she attacked the song, and sang it to the end with an admirable justness of intonation and beauty of expression. Mademoiselle de Launay was enchanted. Madame du Maine arrived in despair at what she had heard about Mademoiselle Bury. Mademoiselle de Launay begged Bathilde to begin the cantata again. Bathilde did not dare to refuse; she played and sang like an angel. Madame du Maine joined her prayers to those of Mademoiselle de Launay. You know, Chevalier, that it is impossible to refuse Madame du Maine anything.

"Poor Bathilde was obliged to give way, and half laughing, half crying, she consented, on two conditions: the first, that she might go herself to her friend Buvat to explain her absence; the second, that she might remain at home all that evening and the next morning in order to study the unfortunate cantata. These clauses, after a long discussion, were granted, with reciprocal promises, — on Bathilde's part, that she would return at seven o'clock the next evening; on the part of Mademoiselle de Launay and Madame du Maine, that every one should continue to believe that it was Mademoiselle Bury who sang."

"But then," asked D'Harmental, "how was the secret betrayed?"

"Oh! by an unforeseen circumstance," replied Brigaud, in that strange manner which caused one to doubt whether he was in jest or earnest. "All went off capitally, as you know, till the end of the cantata; as is proved by the fact that having heard it but once, you are able to remember it from one end to the other. At the moment the galley which brought us from the pavilion of Aurora touched the shore, whether from emotion at having sung for the first time in public, or because she recognized in Madame du Maine's suite some one she had not expected to see there, — for some unknown reason, the poor Goddess of Night uttered a cry and fainted in the arms of the Hours, her companions. All promises and oaths were at once forgotten. Her veil was removed to throw water in her face; so that when I came up, while you were going away with her Highness, I was much astonished to find, instead of Mademoiselle Bury, your pretty neighbor. I questioned Mademoiselle de Launay, and as it was impossible any longer to keep the incognito, she told me what had happened, — under the seal of secrecy, which I have betrayed for you only, my dear pupil; because, I don't know why, I can refuse you nothing."

"And this indisposition?" asked D'Harmental, with uneasiness.

"Oh, it was nothing,— the effect of a momentary emotion; and it had no bad consequences, since, in spite of all they could say to the contrary, Bathilde would not remain another hour at Sceaux, but insisted on returning. They put a carriage at her disposal, and she ought to have been at home an hour before us."

"Then you are sure she is at home? Thanks, Abbé; that is all I wished to know."

"And now," said Brigaud, "I may go, may I not?

You have no more need of me, now that you know all you wish to know."

"I do not say so, my dear Brigaud; on the contrary, stay. You will give me great pleasure."

"No, I thank you; I have some business of my own to transact in the town, and will leave you to your reflections, my dear pupil."

"When shall I see you again?" asked D'Harmental, mechanically.

"Most likely to-morrow," answered the abbé.

"Adieu till to-morrow, then."

"Till to-morrow."

So saying, the abbé turned round, laughing in his peculiar manner, and reached the door while D'Harmental was reopening his window, determined to remain there till the next day, if necessary, even though as a reward for this long watch he should catch only a single glimpse of Bathilde.

The poor gentleman was in love over head and ears.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A PRETEXT.

At a few minutes past four D'Harmental saw Buvat turning the corner of the Rue du Temps-Perdu. The chevalier observed that the worthy writer moved with more haste than usual, and that instead of holding his stick vertically, as a bourgeois generally does when he is walking, he held it horizontally, like a runner. As to that appearance of majesty which had so struck Monsieur Boniface, it had entirely vanished, and had given place to a slight expression of uneasiness. There was no misunderstanding this; Buvat would not return so quickly if he was not uneasy about Bathilde. Bathilde, then, was suffering.

The chevalier followed Buvat with his eyes till the moment when he disappeared through the door of the passage-way to his house. D'Harmental, with reason, imagined that Buvat would go into Bathilde's room, instead of mounting to his own; and he hoped that Buvat would open the window to admit the last rays of the sun, which had been caressing it all day.

But D'Harmental was wrong; Buvat contented himself with raising the curtain, and pressing his good round face against the window, and drumming on the panes with his hands. But even this appearance was of short duration, for he turned round suddenly, as a man does when any one calls him; he let fall the muslin curtain behind him, and so was out of sight. D'Harmental presumed that his dis-

appearance was caused by some appeal to his appetite, and this reminded him that in his preoccupation about the obstinacy of that unlucky window in refusing to open, he had forgotten his own breakfast, which, it must be confessed, to the shame of his sensibility, was a very great infraction on his habits. Now, however, as there was no chance that the window would open while his neighbors were at dinner, the chevalier determined to profit by the interval by dining himself; consequently he rang for the porter, and ordered him to get from the confectioner the fattest pullet, and from the fruiterer the finest fruit that he could find. As to wine, he still had some bottles of that which the Abbé Brigaud had sent him.

D'Harmental ate with a certain remorse. He could not understand how he could be at the same time so tormented, and have such a good appetite. Luckily he remembered reading in the works of some moralist or other that sorrow sharpens hunger wonderfully. This maxim set his conscience at rest, and the result was that the unfortunate pullet was eaten up to the very bones.

Although the act of dining was very natural, and by no means reprehensible, D'Harmental, before seating himself at the table, shut the window, contriving, however, in closing the curtains, to leave a slight opening between them, through which he could see the upper stories of the house opposite to his. Thanks to this precaution, just as he finished his repast he perceived Buvat, who, having doubtless finished his own dinner, appeared at the window of his terrace. As we have said, the weather was splendid, and Buvat seemed disposed to profit by it; but as he belonged to that class of beings who enjoy nothing alone, he turned round with a gesture which D'Harmental took to be an invitation to Bathilde — who had doubtless followed him into his room — to come out on the terrace

with him. Consequently, he hoped for an instant that Bathilde would appear, and he rose with a beating heart; but he was mistaken. However tempting might be the beautiful evening, and however pressing the invitations of Buvat, both were useless. But it was not so with Mirza, who, jumping out of the window without being invited, began to bound joyously about the terrace, holding in her mouth a purple ribbon, which she caused to flutter like a streamer, and which D'Harmental recognized as the one which had fastened his neighbor's hat on the preceding night. Apparently Buvat recognized it also, for he started off in pursuit of Mirza as fast as his little legs would allow him, — a pursuit which would doubtless have been indefinitely prolonged, if Mirza had not had the imprudence to take refuge in the famous cavern of the hydra of which we have given our readers so full a description. Buvat hesitated to extend his arm into the cave, but at length, mustering his courage, he followed the fugitive, and a moment later D'Harmental saw him return with the ribbon in his hand, which he passed back and forth on his knee to efface the wrinkles, after which he folded it up, and went in, probably to deposit it in some drawer where it would be safe from Mirza's roguery.

This was the moment that the chevalier had waited for. He opened his window and watched. In a minute Mirza put her head out of the cavern, looked about her, yawned, shook her ears, and jumped upon the terrace; then D'Harmental called her in the most caressing and seductive tone which he could command. Mirza trembled at the sound of his voice, then directed her eyes toward him. At the first look she recognized the man of the bits of sugar, gave a little growl of joy, then, with a rapid gastronomic instinct, she darted through Buvat's window with a single bound, and disappeared.

D'Harmental looked down, and almost at the same instant saw Mirza coming across the street like a flash of lightning; before he had time to shut his window, she was already scratching at the door. Fortunately for D'Harmental, Mirza had the memory of sugar as strongly developed as he had that of sounds.

It will be easily understood that the chevalier did not make the charming little creature wait; and she darted into the room, bounding, and giving the most unequivocal signs of joy at his unexpected return. As to D'Harmental, he was almost as happy as if he had seen Bathilde. Mirza was something to the young girl; she was her dearly loved greyhound, so caressed and kissed by her, who laid her head on Bathilde's knees in the daytime, and slept on the foot of her bed at night, — the confidante of her sorrows and of her happiness, and a messenger also, safe and speedy; it was in this latter capacity that D'Harmental had summoned her to him, and had received her so hospitably. The chevalier set Mirza to eating sugar, and sat down at his desk. Letting his heart speak, and his pen run on, he wrote the following letter: —

DEAREST BATHILDE, — You believe me very guilty, do you not? But you cannot know the strange circumstances in which I find myself, and which are my excuse. If I could be happy enough to see you for an instant (even for an instant) you would understand that there are in me two different persons, — the young student of the attic, and the gentleman of the fêtes at Sceaux. Open your window, then, so that I may see you, or your door, so that I may speak to you. Let me come and sue for your pardon on my knees. I am certain that when you know how unfortunate I am, and how devotedly I love you, you will have pity on me.

Adieu, or rather *au revoir*, dear Bathilde; I love you more than I can express, more than you can believe, more than you can ever imagine. RAOUL.

This letter, which would have appeared very cold to a woman of these days, because it said only what the writer intended, seemed sufficient to the chevalier, and was really impassioned for that time. D'Harmental folded it up, and attached it, as he had the first, to Mirza's collar; then, taking up the sugar, which the greedy little animal followed with her eyes to the cupboard, where he shut it up, the chevalier opened the door of his room, and showed Mirza, with a gesture, what there remained for her to do. Whether it was pride or intelligence, the little creature did not wait to be told twice; she darted out on the staircase, stopped on the way only to bite Monsieur Boniface, whom she met coming home from his office, crossed the road, and disappeared in the passage-way to Bathilde's house. D'Harmental remained at the window for a minute, fearing that Mirza would take his note to Buvat instead of Bathilde; but she was too intelligent for that, and since he did not see her at the window of the terrace, he sagaciously inferred that she had stopped in the fourth story. Consequently, in order not to frighten poor Bathilde too much, he shut his window, hoping that by this concession he should obtain some sign which would indicate to him that he might yet be pardoned.

But it had no such result. D'Harmental waited in vain all the evening and a part of the night. At eleven o'clock, the light, scarcely seen through the double curtains still hermetically closed, went out altogether. D'Harmental watched an hour longer at his open window, ready to seize the first opportunity for reconciliation; but nothing appeared. All was silent and dark; and he was obliged to renounce the hope of seeing Bathilde till the next day.

The next day brought the same rigid reserve; it was a settled plan of defence, which, to a man less in love than D'Harmental, would simply have indicated fear of

defeat; but the chevalier, with a simplicity worthy of the age of gold, saw nothing but a coldness, in the eternity of which he began to believe; it is true that it had lasted twenty-four hours.

D'Harmental occupied himself all the first half of the day with turning in his mind a thousand projects, each more absurd than those that came before it. The only one which was characterized by common-sense was to cross the street, mount boldly to Bathilde's room, and tell her everything. It came to his mind like all the rest; and as it was the only reasonable one, D'Harmental was very careful not to stop at it. And indeed, it would be a great boldness to present himself thus before Bathilde, without being authorized by the least sign, and without having any pretext to give. Such a course of conduct could but wound her, and she was only too much irritated already; it was better to wait, then, and D'Harmental waited.

At two o'clock Brigaud returned, and found D'Harmental in a very savage state of mind. The abbé threw a glance toward the window, still hermetically closed, and divined everything. He took a chair, and sat down opposite D'Harmental, twisting his thumbs round one another, as he saw the chevalier doing.

"My dear pupil," said he, after a moment's silence, "either I am a bad physiognomist, or I read on your face that something profoundly sad has happened to you."

"And you read right, my dear Abbé," said the chevalier; "I am *ennuyé*."

"Ah, really?"

"So much so," said D'Harmental, "that I am ready to send your conspiracy to the devil."

"Oh, Chevalier, one must not throw the helve after the hatchet! What! send the conspiracy to the devil,

when it is going on wheels? Nonsense! and what will the others say?"

"Oh, you are charming, — you and your others. The others, my dear Abbé, have society, balls, the opera, duels, mistresses, — amusements, in short; they are not shut up, like me, in a miserable garret."

"Yes; but the piano, the drawing?"

"Even with this, it is not amusing."

"Ah, it is not amusing when one sings or draws alone; but when one sings or draws in company, it begins to be better."

"And with whom, in the devil's name, should I sing or draw?"

"In the first place, there are the Demoiselles Denis."

"Oh, yes, they sing beautifully and draw well, do they not?"

"*Mon Dieu!* I do not propose them to you as virtuosos and artists; they have not the talents of your neighbor. But, by the bye, there is your neighbor."

"Well, my neighbor?"

"Why do you not sing with her, since she sings so well? That will amuse you."

"Do I know her? Does she even open her window? Look, since yesterday she has barricaded herself in her own room. Ah, yes, my neighbor is amiable!"

"Yes, they told me that she was charming."

"Besides, it seems to me that both singing in our own rooms, we should have a singular duet."

"Then go to her room."

"To her room! Have I been introduced to her? Do I know her?"

"Well, make a pretext."

"I have been searching for one since yesterday."

"And you have not found one? A man of imagina-

tion like you! My dear pupil, I do not recognize you there."

"Listen, Abbé! A truce to your pleasantries! I am not in the humor for them to-day; every one has his stupid days."

"Well, on those days one addresses himself to his friends."

"To his friends! And for what?"

"To find the pretext which he has himself sought for in vain."

"Well, then, Abbé, you are my friend; find the pretext. I wait for it."

"Nothing is easier."

"Really!"

"Do you want it?"

"Take care what you engage to do."

"I engage to open your neighbor's door to you."

"In a proper manner?"

"What! do I know any others?"

"Abbé, I will strangle you if your pretext is bad."

"And if it is good?"

"If it is good, Abbé, if it is good, — you are an adorable man."

"You remember what the Comte de Laval said about the descent which the police have made upon the house in the Val-de-Grâce, and the necessity he was under of sending away his workmen and burying his press?"

"Perfectly."

"You remember the determination which was come to in consequence?"

"Yes; to employ a copyist."

"Finally, you remember that I undertook to find that copyist?"

"I do."

"Well, this copyist on whom I had cast my eyes, this honest man whom I promised to discover, is discovered, and is no other than the guardian of Bathilde."

"Buvat?"

"Himself! Well, I give you full powers. You go to his house; you offer him gold; the door is opened wide to you, and you can sing as much as you like with Bathilde."

"My dear Abbé," cried D'Harmental, "you have saved my life!"

D'Harmental took his hat, and darted toward the door; now that he had a pretext, he doubted of nothing.

"Stop, stop!" said Brigaud; "you do not even ask me where the good man must go for the papers in question."

"To your house, of course!"

"Certainly not, young man, certainly not."

"Where, then?"

"To the Prince de Listhnay's. Rue du Bac, 110."

"The Prince de Listhnay! and who is he?"

"A prince of our own making, — D'Avranches, the *valet-de-chambre* to Madame du Maine."

"And you think that he will play his part well?"

"Not well enough for you, perhaps, who are accustomed to see princes, but for Buvat — "

"You are right. *Au revoir*, Abbé."

"You find the pretext good?"

"Capital."

"Go, then, and good luck go with you!"

D'Harmental descended the stairs four at a time; having arrived at the middle of the street, and seeing the abbé watching him from the window, he made a parting sign to him with his hand, and disappeared through the door of the passage-way to Bathilde's house.

CHAPTER XXIX.

COUNTERPLOTS.

On her part, as may be easily understood, Bathilde had not made such an effort without suffering from it; the poor child loved D'Harmental with all the strength of a love at seventeen, — a first love. During the first month of his absence she had counted the days; during the fifth week she had counted the hours; during the last week she had counted the minutes. Then it was that the Abbé de Chaulieu had come for her, to take her to Mademoiselle de Launay; and as he had taken care, not only to speak of her talents, but also to tell who she was, Bathilde had been received with all the consideration which was due to her, and which poor De Launay paid all the more readily because it had been so long forgotten toward herself.

This visit, which had rendered Buvat so proud, had been welcomed by Bathilde as a distraction, which might help her to pass these last moments of suspense; but when she found that Mademoiselle de Launay wished to retain her the very day on which, according to her calculation, Raoul would return, she heartily regretted her visit to Sceaux, and would certainly have refused if Madame du Maine herself had not interposed. It was impossible to refuse a person who, according to the ideas of the time, from the supremacy of her rank, had almost a right to command this service; but as she would have reproached herself eternally if Raoul had returned in her absence, and on returning had found her window closed, she had,

as we have seen, insisted on returning to study the cantata, and to explain to Buvat what had taken place. Poor Bathilde! she had invented two false pretexts, to hide under a double veil the true motive of her return.

If Buvat had been proud when Bathilde was employed to design the costumes for the fête, he was doubly so when he found that she was destined to play a part in it. He had constantly dreamed of Bathilde's return to fortune, and to that social position of which her parents' death had deprived her; and anything that put her in communication with the social circle to which she belonged, appeared to him a step toward this inevitable and happy result.

Nevertheless, the experiment had borne heavily on him. The three days which he had passed without seeing Bathilde had appeared to him like three centuries. At the office it was not so bad, though every one could see that some extraordinary event had happened; but when he came home, poor Buvat found himself altogether miserable. The first day he could not eat when he sat down alone to that table where, for thirteen years, he had been accustomed to see Bathilde sitting opposite to him. The next day, when Nanette reproached him, and told him that he was injuring his health, he made an effort to eat; but he had hardly finished his meal when he felt as if he had been swallowing lead; and he was obliged to have recourse to the most powerful digestives to help down this unfortunate dinner. The third day Buvat did not sit down to table at all, and Nanette had the greatest trouble to persuade him to take some broth, into which she declared she saw two great tears fall. At last, on the evening of the third day, Bathilde returned, and brought back his sleep and his appetite. Buvat, who for three nights had hardly slept, and for three days had

hardly eaten, now slept like a top and ate like an ogre.

Bathilde also was very joyous; she calculated that this must be the last day of Raoul's absence. He had written to her that he should be away six weeks. She had already counted forty-one long days; the six weeks had therefore passed, and Bathilde, judging Raoul by herself, would not admit that there could be an instant's delay. Therefore the next day she watched her neighbor's window constantly while studying the cantata. Carriages rarely entered the Rue du Temps-Perdu, but it happened that three passed between ten and four; every time a carriage passed she ran breathless to the window, and every time she was disappointed.

Shortly after four o'clock Buvat returned, and this time it was Bathilde who could not swallow a single morsel. The time to set out for Sceaux at length arrived. Bathilde went for the last time to her window; still no sign of Raoul's return. The idea that his absence might be prolonged beyond the appointed time then occurred to her for the first time, and she went away with a heavy heart, and regretting more than ever that fête which prevented her spending the night watching for him whom already she had so long expected.

When she arrived at Sceaux, however, the lights, the noise, the music, and, above all, the excitement of singing for the first time in public diverted her attention from thoughts of Raoul. Once the idea crossed her mind that he might return during her absence, and that finding her window closed, he might think her indifferent; but then she remembered that Mademoiselle de Launay had promised her that she should return home before daylight, and she determined that Raoul should see her standing at her window as soon as he opened his. Then she would ex-

plain to him how she had been obliged to be absent that evening; she would allow him to suspect what she had suffered; and if she might judge of his feelings by her own, he would be so happy that he would forgive her.

All this passed through Bathilde's mind while waiting for Madame du Maine on the border of the lake; and it was in the midst of the discourse she was preparing for Raoul that the approach of the little galley surprised her. At first — in her fear of singing before such a great company — she thought her voice would fail; but she was too good a musician not to be encouraged by the admirable instrumentation which supported her. She resolved not to allow herself to be intimidated, and abandoning herself to the inspiration of the music and of the scene, she went through her part with such success that every one continued to take her for the singer whom she replaced, although that singer was the first at the opera, and was supposed to have no rival.

But Bathilde's astonishment was great when, after the solo was finished, she looked toward the group which was approaching her, and saw, seated by Madame du Maine, a young cavalier so much like Raoul that if this apparition had presented itself to her in the midst of the song, her voice must have failed her. For an instant she doubted; but as the galley touched the shore she could do so no longer. It was impossible that two persons, though brothers, should resemble each other so exactly; it was certain that the young cavalier of Sceaux and the young student of the attic were one and the same.

This was not, however, what wounded Bathilde; the rank which Raoul appeared to hold, instead of removing him from the daughter of Albert du Rocher, only brought him nearer to her; and besides, she had recognized in him at first sight, as he had in her, the marks of high

birth. What wounded her — as a betrayal of her good faith and an insult to her love — was this pretended absence, during which Raoul, forgetting the Rue du Temps-Perdu, had left his little room unoccupied to mix in the fêtes at Sceaux. Thus Raoul had had but an instant's caprice for her, sufficient to induce him to pass a week or two in an attic; but he had soon got tired of this life. Then, not to humiliate Bathilde too much, he had invented the pretext of a journey; to avoid distressing her, he had pretended that to him this journey was a misfortune. But nothing of this was true; Raoul had not left Paris, or if he had, his first visit on his return had been elsewhere than to the place which should have been so dear to him. In this accumulation of sorrows there was enough to wound a love less sensitive than that of Bathilde. And therefore, when Raoul touched the shore, and she found herself only four steps from him; when it was impossible for her longer to doubt that the young student and the handsome nobleman were the same; when she saw him whom she had supposed to be a young provincial offering his arm in that elegant and easy manner to the proud Madame du Maine herself, — her strength abandoned her, and with that cry which had gone to D'Harmental's heart she fainted. On opening her eyes, she found near her Mademoiselle de Launay, who lavished on her every possible attention, and insisted that instead of returning to Paris Bathilde should remain at Sceaux; but she was in haste to leave this place where she had suffered so much, and begged, with an accent that could not be refused, to be allowed to return; a carriage was in readiness to take her, and she went directly.

On arriving, Bathilde found Nanette waiting for her. Buvat also had intended to sit up, that he might embrace Bathilde on her return, and get news of the grand fête;

but by twelve o'clock he was so sleepy that it was in vain he rubbed his eyes, and tried to sing his favorite song. He could not keep awake, and at length he went to bed, telling Nanette to let him know the next morning as soon as Bathilde was visible.

As may be imagined, Bathilde was well satisfied to find Nanette alone; Buvat's presence would have been very irksome to her. There is in woman's heart, at whatever age, a sympathy for the griefs of love which is never found in the heart of a man, however tender and compassionate that heart may be. In Buvat's presence Bathilde would not have dared to weep; in presence of Nanette she burst into tears. Nanette had expected to see her young mistress return proud and joyous at the triumph which she could not fail to obtain, and was distressed to see her in this state; but to all her questions Bathilde replied that it was nothing, absolutely nothing. Nanette saw that it was of no use to insist, and went to her room, which, as we have said, was next to Bathilde's; but she could not resist the impulse of curiosity, and looking through the key-hole, she saw her young mistress kneel down before her little crucifix, and then, as by a sudden impulse, run to the window, open it, and look at the window opposite. Nanette doubted no longer; Bathilde's grief was somehow connected with her love, and it was caused by the young man who lived on the other side of the street. She felt relieved; women pity these griefs above all others, but they also know that they may come to a good end. Nanette went to sleep much less concerned than she would have been had she not discovered the cause of Bathilde's tears.

Bathilde slept badly; the first griefs and the first joys of love have the same results. She woke therefore with
nken eyes and pale cheeks. She would have dispensed

with seeing Buvat, but he had already asked for her twice, so she took courage, and went smiling to speak to him. Buvat, however, was not deceived; he could not fail to notice her pale cheeks, and Bathilde's grief was obvious to him. She of course denied that she was in any other than her usual condition. Buvat pretended to believe her, but went to the office very uneasy, and anxious to know what could have happened to her.

When he was gone Nanette approached Bathilde, who was sitting in her chair with her head leaning on her hand, and stood an instant before her, contemplating her with an almost maternal love; then, finding that Bathilde did not speak, she herself broke silence.

"Are you suffering still, Mademoiselle?" said she.

"Yes, my good Nanette."

"If you would open the window, I think it would do you good."

"Oh, no, Nanette, thank you; the window must remain closed."

"You do not know, perhaps, Mademoiselle —"

"Yes, yes, Nanette! I know."

"That the young man opposite returned this morning."

"Well, Nanette," said Bathilde, raising her head and looking at her with severity, "what is that to me?"

"Pardon, Mademoiselle," answered Nanette, "but I thought —"

"What did you think?"

"That you regretted his absence, and would be glad of his return."

"You were wrong."

"Pardon, Mademoiselle, but he appears so distinguished."

"Too much so, Nanette; a great deal too much so for poor Bathilde."

"Too distinguished for you, Mademoiselle!" cried

Nanette, "as if you were not worth all the noblemen in the world! Besides, you are noble!"

"I am what I appear to be, Nanette; that is to say, a poor girl, with whose peace, honor, and love, every nobleman thinks he may play with impunity. You see, Nanette, that this window must be closed. I must not see this young man again."

"*Mon Dieu!* Mademoiselle Bathilde, you wish, then, to kill this poor young man with grief! This whole morning he has not moved from his window, and looks so sad that it is enough to break one's heart."

"What does his looking sad matter to me? What has he to do with me? I do not know him. I do not even know his name. He is a stranger, who has come here to stay for a few days, and who to-morrow may go away again, if he has not already gone. If I had thought anything of him, I should have been wrong, Nanette; and instead of encouraging me in a love which would be folly, you ought, on the contrary,—supposing that it existed,—to show me the absurdity and the danger of it."

"*Mon Dieu!* Mademoiselle, why so? You must love some day, and you may as well love a handsome young man who looks like a king, and who must be rich, since he does not do anything."

"Well, Nanette, what would you say if this young man who appears to you so simple, so loyal, and so good, were an evil-minded man, a traitor, a liar?"

"Ah, *mon Dieu!* Mademoiselle, I should say it was impossible."

"If I told you that this young man who lives in an attic, and who shows himself at the window dressed so simply, was yesterday at Sceaux, giving his arm to Madame du Maine, dressed as a colonel?"

"I should say, Mademoiselle, that at last God is just in sending you some one worthy of you. Holy Virgin! a colonel! a friend of the Duchesse du Maine! Oh, Mademoiselle Bathilde, you will be a countess, I tell you! and it is not too much for you. If Providence gave to all what they deserve, you would be a duchess, a princess, a queen, — yes, Queen of France; Madame de Maintenon was — "

"I would not be like her, Nanette."

"I do not say like her; besides, it is not the king you love, Mademoiselle."

"I do not love any one, Nanette."

"I am too polite to contradict you, Mademoiselle. But never mind, you are ill; and the first remedy for a young person who is ill is air and sun. Look at the poor flowers; when they are shut up, they turn pale. Let me open the window, Mademoiselle."

"Nanette, I forbid you; go to your work and leave me."

"Very well, Mademoiselle, I will go, since you drive me away," said Nanette, lifting the corner of her apron to her eye; "but if I were in that young man's place, I know very well what I would do."

"And what would you do?"

"I would come and explain myself; and I am sure that even if he were wrong you would excuse him."

"Nanette," said Bathilde, "if he comes, I forbid you to admit him; do you hear?"

"Very well, Mademoiselle; he shall not be admitted, though it is not very polite to turn people away from the door."

"Polite or not, you will do as I tell you," said Bathilde, to whom contradiction gave strength; "and now go. I wish to be alone."

Nanette went out.

When she was alone, Bathilde burst into tears, for her strength was but pride. She believed herself the most unfortunate woman in the world, as D'Harmental thought himself the most unfortunate man.

At a few minutes after four o'clock Buvat returned. Bathilde, seeing the traces of uneasiness on his good-natured face, did all she could to tranquillize him. She smiled, she joked, she kept him company at table; but all was in vain. After dinner he proposed to Bathilde, as an amusement whose attraction was irresistible, to take a walk on the terrace. Bathilde, thinking that if she refused, Buvat would remain with her, made a pretence of accepting, and went up with him into his room; but when there, she remembered that she must write a letter of thanks to the Abbé de Chaulieu, for his kindness in presenting her to Madame du Maine, and leaving her guardian with Mirza, she went down. Shortly after, she heard Mirza scratching at the door, and went to open it. Mirza entered with such demonstrations of joy that Bathilde understood that something extraordinary must have happened; and on looking attentively, she saw the letter tied to Mirza's collar. As this was the second she had brought, Bathilde had no difficulty in guessing whence it came and who was the author of the letter. The temptation was too strong for Bathilde even to try to resist; she detached the paper with one hand, which trembled as she remembered that it probably contained the destiny of her life, while with the other she caressed Mirza, who, standing on her hind-legs, appeared delighted at having become so important a personage. Bathilde opened the letter, and looked at it twice without being
 to decipher a single line. There was a mist before
eyes.

The letter, while it said a great deal, did not say quite enough. It protested innocence and asked for pardon; it spoke of strange circumstances requiring secrecy; but, above all, it said that the writer was madly in love. The result was that, without completely reassuring her, it yet did her good.

Bathilde, however, with a remnant of pride, determined not to relent till the next day; since Raoul confessed himself guilty, he should be punished. She did not remember that half of this punishment would recoil upon herself. The effect of the letter, incomplete as it was, was such that when Buvat returned from the terrace he thought Bathilde looked infinitely better than when he had left her an hour before. Her color had returned; her cheerful manner was more genuine; and her speech was no longer abrupt and nervous, as it had been since the day before. He began, therefore, to believe what she herself had told him in the morning, that her agitation was the result of her excited state the day before; and at eight o'clock he mounted to his room, leaving Bathilde, who complained of having been kept up the night before till three o'clock in the morning, to retire whenever she liked.

But Bathilde, notwithstanding her wakefulness on the preceding night, had not the least inclination to sleep; she sat up for a long time, contented and happy, for she knew that her neighbor's window was open, and by this persistence she understood his anxiety. Two or three times she was inclined to tranquillize his mind by going to him with the assurance that if he would give her any explanation whatever his pardon would be freely accorded; but it seemed to her that thus to present herself to Raoul was more than a young girl in her position ought to do. She therefore postponed the matter to the next day.

That night she dreamed that Raoul was at her feet, and that he gave her such good reasons for his conduct that it was she, in her turn, who asked for pardon.

Thus in the morning she awoke convinced that she had been dreadfully severe, and wondering how she could have had the courage to make poor Raoul suffer so much. And therefore her first movement was to run to the window and open it; but perceiving, through an almost imperceptible opening, the young man at his window, she stopped short. Would not this be too complete an avowal? It would be better to wait for Nanette; she would open the window quite as a matter of course, and, opened thus by her, it would afford her neighbor no ground to plume himself on his share in the matter.

Nanette arrived; but she had been too much scolded the day before about this window to risk being scolded a second time. She went about her work without saying a word in regard to the admission of fresh air; and when she went out she had not touched even the curtains. Bathilde was ready to cry.

Buvat came down as usual to take his coffee with Bathilde. She hoped that he at least would ask why she kept herself so shut up; and upon that she might ask him to open the window. Buvat, however, had received a new order for the classification of some manuscripts, and was so preoccupied that he finished his coffee and left the room without once remarking that the curtains were closed.

For the first time Bathilde felt almost angry with him, and thought he must have paid her very little attention not to discover that she must be half stifled in such a close room. What was she to do? Tell Nanette to open the window? She would not do it. Open it herself she could not. She must then wait; but till when? Till

the next day, or the day after perhaps, and what would Raoul think? Would he not become impatient at this exaggerated severity? Suppose he should again leave for a fortnight, for a month, for six weeks, for ever? Bathilde would die; she could not live without Raoul.

Two hours passed thus; Bathilde tried everything, her embroidery, her harpsichord, her drawing, but she could do nothing. Nanette came in; a slight hope returned to her. But Nanette wished only to ask leave to go out. Bathilde signed to her that she could go. She was going to the Faubourg St. Antoine; she would be away, then, at least two hours. What was Bathilde to do during these two hours? It would have been so delightful to pass them at the window.

Bathilde sat down and drew out the letter; she knew it by heart, but yet she read it again. How had she refrained from surrendering at once on receiving such a letter as that? It was so tender, so passionate, so evidently from the heart. Oh, if she could receive a second letter! This was an idea; she looked at Mirza, the graceful little messenger; she took her in her arms, and then, trembling as if she were about to commit a crime, she went to open the outer door. A young man was standing before this door reaching out his hand toward the bell. Bathilde uttered a cry of joy, and the young man a cry of love. That young man was Raoul.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE SEVENTH HEAVEN.

Bathilde made some steps backward, for she had nearly fallen into Raoul's arms. Raoul, having shut the door, followed Bathilde into the room. Their two names, exchanged in a double cry, escaped their lips. Their hands met in an electric clasp, and all was forgotten. These two, who had so much to say, stood with their hearts beating almost against each other, and said nothing. Their souls had passed into their eyes, and spoke with the grand voice of silence, which, in love, says so many things, and which has this advantage over the other voice, — that it never lies.

Thus they remained for some minutes. At length Bathilde felt the tears coming into her eyes; she sighed, and throwing back her head as if to recover her breath, she said, "Oh, *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* how I have suffered!"

"And have not I?" said D'Harmental, — "I, who have appeared to you guilty, and am yet innocent!"

"Innocent!" cried Bathilde, to whom, by a natural reaction, all her doubts returned.

"Yes, innocent," replied the chevalier.

And then he told Bathilde all that he had a right to tell her, — that is to say, his duel with Lafare; how he had, after that, hidden in the Rue du Temps-Perdu; how he had seen Bathilde, and loved her; his astonishment

at discovering successively in her the elegant woman, the skilful painter, the accomplished musician; his joy when he began to think that she was not wholly indifferent to him. Then he told her how he had received, as colonel of carabineers, the order to go to Bretagne, and on his return had been obliged to render an account of his mission to the Duchesse du Maine before returning to Paris. He had gone directly to Sceaux, expecting only to leave his despatches in passing, when he had found himself in the midst of the fête, in which he had been obliged unwillingly to take a part. This recital was concluded by expressions of regret, and such protestations of fidelity and love that Bathilde almost forgot the beginning of his discourse in listening to the end.

It was now her turn. She also had a long history to tell D'Harmental; but in it there were no reserves or obscurities. It was the history, not of an epoch in her life, but of all her life. With a certain pride in proving to her lover that she was worthy of him, she showed herself as a child caressed by her father and mother, then an orphan and abandoned; then appeared Buvat, with his plain face and his sublime heart, and she spoke of all his attentions, all his kindness, all his love for his poor pupil. She passed in review her careless childhood and her pensive youth; then she arrived at the time when she first saw D'Harmental, and when she reached that point she smiled, blushing, for she was very sure that there was nothing further which she needed to tell him.

But she was mistaken. That which Bathilde thought she had no need to recount to the chevalier was precisely what the chevalier insisted on hearing from her own lips, without the omission of a single detail. In vain the poor child paused, blushed, lowered her eyes; she was obliged to open her virginal heart, while D'Harmental, on his

knees before her, listened to her smallest words. And when she was through, she must begin again; for D'Harmental could not weary of hearing, — so happy was he in finding himself loved by Bathilde, and so proud of his love for her.

Two hours slipped by like two seconds, and they were still there when some one rang at the door. Bathilde looked at the clock which was in the corner of the room; it was six minutes past four. The knocking could mean but one thing, — Buvat's return. Bathilde's first movement was one of fear; but Raoul reassured her, smiling, for he had the pretext with which the Abbé Brigaud had furnished him. The two lovers exchanged a last grasp of the hand, then Bathilde went to open the door to her guardian, who, as usual, kissed her on the forehead, then, on entering the room, perceived D'Harmental. Buvat was astounded; he had never before found any man with his pupil. He fixed on D'Harmental his astonished eyes and waited; he fancied he had seen the young man before. D'Harmental advanced toward him with that ease of which people of a certain class have not even an idea.

"It is to Monsieur Buvat," he said, "that I have the honor of speaking?"

"To myself, Monsieur," said Buvat, starting at the sound of the voice, which he thought he recognized; "but the honor is on my side."

"You know the Abbé Brigaud?" asked D'Harmental.

"Yes, perfectly, Monsieur; the — the — the — of Madame Denis, is he not?"

"Yes," replied D'Harmental, smiling; "the confessor of Madame Denis."

"Yes, I know him, — a clever man, Monsieur, a clever man."

"Did you not once apply to him to get some copying to do?"

"Yes, Monsieur, for I am a copyist, at your service."

"Well," said D'Harmental, "this dear Abbé Brigaud, who is my guardian, — that you may know, Monsieur, to whom you are speaking, — has found an excellent customer for you."

"Ah, really? Take a seat, Monsieur."

"Thank you."

"And who is this customer, if you please?"

"The Prince de Listhnay, Rue du Bac, 110."

"A prince, Monsieur! a prince?"

"Yes; a Spaniard, who is in correspondence with the 'Mercure de Madrid,' and sends all the news from Paris."

"Why, it is a godsend, that, Monsieur!"

"A godsend indeed, as you say. It will give you some trouble, however, for all the despatches are in Spanish."

"*Diable!*" said Buvat.

"Do you know Spanish?" asked D'Harmental.

"No, Monsieur; I do not think so, at least."

"Never mind," continued the chevalier, smiling at Buvat's uncertainty; "one need not know a language to make copies in that language."

"I could copy Chinese, Monsieur; caligraphy, like drawing, is an imitative art."

"And I know that in this respect, Monsieur Buvat," replied D'Harmental, "you are a great artist."

"Monsieur," said Buvat, "you embarrass me. May I ask, without indiscretion, at what time I shall find his Highness?"

"What Highness?"

"His Highness the Prince de — I don't remember the name you mentioned, Monsieur — which you did me the honor to mention," added Buvat, correcting himself.

"Ah, the Prince de Listhnay."

"That is it."

"He is not Highness, my dear Monsieur Buvat."

"Pardon, I thought all princes —"

"Oh, there are princes and princes. This is a prince of the third order, and he will be quite satisfied if you call him Monseigneur."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"And when shall I find him, if you please?"

"Why, in an hour from now, if you wish, — after your dinner, for example, from five to half-past five. You remember the address?"

"Yes; Rue du Bac, 110. Very good, Monsieur; very good. I will be there."

"Now," said D'Harmental, "*au revoir!* And you, Mademoiselle," he added, turning to Bathilde, "receive my thanks for your kindness in keeping me company while I waited for Monsieur Buvat, a kindness for which, I assure you, I shall be eternally grateful."

And D'Harmental took his leave, while Bathilde remained astonished at the ease and assurance which his experience in similar situations had given him.

"This young man is really very amiable," said Buvat.

"Yes, very," said Bathilde, mechanically.

"But it is an extraordinary thing; I think I have seen him before."

"It is possible," said Bathilde.

"And his voice; I am sure I know his voice."

Bathilde started; for she remembered the evening when Buvat had returned frightened from the adventure in the Rue des Bons-Enfans, and D'Harmental had not spoken of that adventure. At this moment Nanette entered, announcing dinner. Buvat, who was eager for his interview

with the Prince de Listhnay, went first into the dining-room.

"Well, Mademoiselle," said Nanette, softly, "the handsome young man came, then, after all?"

"Yes, Nanette, yes," answered Bathilde, raising her eyes to heaven with an expression of infinite gratitude; "and I am very happy."

She passed on into the dining-room, where Buvat, who had put his hat on his cane and his cane in a corner, was waiting for her, and slapping his thighs with his hands, as was his custom in his moments of extreme satisfaction.

As to D'Harmental, he was no less happy than Bathilde. He was loved, — he was sure of it; Bathilde had told him so, with the same pleasure she had felt on hearing him make the same declaration. He was loved, not by a poor orphan, not by a little grisette, but by a young daughter of the nobility, whose father and mother had occupied an honorable position at court. There were, then, no obstacles to their union; if there remained some difference of rank between them, it was so slight that Bathilde needed to ascend but a single step, and D'Harmental to descend a single step, and they would meet midway. It is true that D'Harmental forgot one thing, — the secret which, because it was not his own, he thought himself obliged to withhold from Bathilde; that conspiracy which hollowed under his feet an abyss which might engulf him at any moment. But D'Harmental was not thinking of such things. He was sure that he was loved, and the sun of love gave to his sad and desolate life a rose-colored horizon.

As to Bathilde, she was troubled by no doubts about the future. It is true no word of marriage had been spoken between her and D'Harmental; but their hearts had been manifest to each other in all their purity, and

no written contract of marriage could be worth so much as a look from Raoul's eyes, and the pressure of his hands. And so when, after dinner, Buvat, congratulating himself on the prize that had fallen to him, took his hat and cane to go to the Prince de Listhnay's, she first fell on her knees to thank God, and then, without hesitation, went to open the window so long closed. D'Harmental was still at his. They had very soon settled their plans, and taken Nanette into their confidence. Every day when Buvat was gone, D'Harmental was to come and stay two hours with Bathilde. The rest of the time would be passed at the windows, or, if by chance these must be closed, they would write to each other. Toward seven o'clock they saw Buvat turning the corner of the Rue Montmartre; he carried a roll of paper in one hand, and his cane in the other, and by his important air, it was easy to see that he had spoken to the prince himself. D'Harmental closed his window.

Bathilde had feared that this story of the Prince de Listhnay was only an invention to explain D'Harmental's presence. Having had no chance to ask for an explanation, and not daring to dissuade Buvat from going to the Rue du Bac, she had witnessed his departure with a certain degree of remorse. She loved Buvat with all the gratitude of her heart. He was to her an object of sacred veneration, to be forever shielded from ridicule. She therefore awaited his return with anxiety, that she might infer from the expression of his face what had happened. Buvat's face was glowing.

"Well, little father?" said Bathilde, with lingering apprehension.

"Well," replied Buvat, "I have seen his Highness."

"But, pardon, little father," she said, smiling; "you know that Monsieur Raoul said the Prince de Listhnay

has no right to that title, since he is only a prince of the third order."

"I guarantee him of the first," said Buvat. "*Sabre de bois!* a man of five feet ten, who throws his money about, and pays for copies at fifteen francs the page, and has given twenty-five louis in advance. A prince of the third order! I should think so!"

Then another fear came into Bathilde's mind, — that this pretended customer, whom Raoul had found for Buvat, was only a pretext to induce him to accept money, which he might think he had earned. This fear had in it something humiliating and oppressive. Bathilde turned her eyes toward D'Harmental's window, but she saw D'Harmental looking at her with so much love that she thought of nothing but of looking at him in return, which she did with such eagerness that Buvat came forward to see what was attracting her attention. But D'Harmental, seeing him, let fall the curtain, and the good man's curiosity remained unsatisfied.

"So, then, little father," said Bathilde, wishing to turn off his attention, "you are content?"

"Quite; but I must tell you one thing."

"What is it?"

"You remember that I told you that I thought I recognized the face and voice of this young man, but could not tell you where I had seen and heard them?"

"Yes, you told me so."

"Well, it suddenly struck me to-day, as I was crossing the Rue des Bons-Enfans, that it was the same young man whom I saw on that terrible night of which I cannot think without trembling."

"Really, little father?" said Bathilde, trembling. "Oh, what folly!"

"Yes, what folly! for I was on the point of returning.

I thought this Prince de Listhnay might be some brigand chief, and that they were going to entice me into a cavern. But as I never carry any money, I concluded that my fears were exaggerated, and fortunately I overcame them by force of reason."

"And now, little father, you are satisfied, are you not," replied Bathilde, "that this poor young man, who came here this afternoon in behalf of the Abbé Brigaud, has no connection with him to whom you spoke in the Rue des Bons-Enfans?"

"Certainly. A captain of thieves could have no connection with his Highness."

"Oh, that would be impossible!" said Bathilde.

"Yes, that would be impossible. But I am forgetting. My child, you must excuse me if I do not stay with you this evening. I promised his Highness that I would go to work at once, and I must keep my promise. Good-night, my dear child."

"Good-night, little father."

Buvat went up to his room, where he immediately applied himself to the task for which the Prince de Listhnay had so liberally paid him.

As to the lovers, they resumed the conversation interrupted by Buvat's return; and God only knows at what hour the two windows were closed.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FÉNELON'S SUCCESSOR.

THANKS to the arrangements agreed upon between the two lovers, which afforded to their love so long restrained all the expansion possible, three or four days slipped by like moments, during which they were the happiest beings in the world.

But the earth, which seemed to them to be at a standstill, continued its revolutions, and the events which were to waken them, at the moment when they least expected interruption, were silently preparing.

The Duc de Richelieu had kept his promise. The Maréchal de Villeroy, who had intended to remain a week away from the Tuileries, was recalled on the fourth day by a letter from his wife, who wrote to him that his presence near the king was more than ever necessary, the measles having declared itself at Paris, and having already attacked several persons in the Palais Royal. Monsieur de Villeroy came back directly; for, it will be remembered, all those successive deaths which three or four years before had afflicted the kingdom had been attributed to the measles, and the marshal would not lose this opportunity of parading his vigilance. It was his privilege, as governor of the king, never to leave him except by an order from himself, and to remain with him, whoever entered, even though it should be the regent. It was especially with regard to the regent that the marshal affected such extraordinary precaution; and

as this suited the hatred of Madame du Maine and her party, they praised Monsieur de Villeroy highly, and spread abroad a report that he had found on the chimney-piece of Louis XV. some poisoned bonbons which had been placed there by some person unknown.

The result of all this was an increase of calumny against the Duc d'Orléans, and of importance on the part of the marshal, who persuaded the young king that he owed him his life. Through the force of that belief he acquired great influence over the poor royal child, who, accustomed to fear everything, had confidence in no one but Monsieur de Villeroy and Monsieur de Fréjus.

Monsieur de Villeroy, then, was the man who was needed to deliver the missives; but such was the irresolution of his character that he accepted the charge only after considerable hesitation. It was finally arranged that on the following Monday — a day when by reason of his Sunday suppers the regent rarely visited the king — the two letters of Philip V. should be sent to him, and then Monsieur de Villeroy should profit by his solitude with his pupil to make him sign the order for the convocation of the States-General, and that it should be made public the next day before the hour of the regent's visit, so that there should be no way of drawing back.

While all these things were plotting against him, the regent was leading his ordinary life in the midst of his work, his studies, his pleasures, and his family bickerings. As we have said, three of his daughters gave him serious trouble. Madame de Berri, whom he loved the most, because he had saved her when the most celebrated doctors had given her up, throwing off all restraint, lived publicly with Riom, whom, when reproached by her father, she threatened to marry. A strange threat, but which, if carried out, would have caused at that time,

owing to the regard still cherished for the supremacy of rank, far more scandal than the amours which at any other time such a marriage would have sanctified.

Mademoiselle de Chartres persisted in her resolution to become a nun, although she still, during her novitiate, continued to enjoy all the pleasures she could manage to introduce into the cloister. She had in her cell her guns and pistols, and a magnificent assortment of fireworks, which enabled her to give a pyrotechnic entertainment to her young friends every evening. But she would not leave the convent, where her father went every Wednesday to visit her.

The third person of the family who gave him uneasiness was Mademoiselle de Valois, whom he suspected of being Richelieu's mistress, but without ever being able to obtain certain proof, although he had put his police on the watch, and had himself more than once paid her visits at hours when he thought it most probable he should meet the duke. These suspicions were increased by her refusal to marry the Prince de Dombes, — an excellent match, enriched as he was by the spoils of La Grande Mademoiselle. The regent had seized a new opportunity of assuring himself whether this refusal was due to her antipathy to the young prince or to her love for the duke, by welcoming the overtures which Pléneuf, his ambassador at Turin, had made for a marriage between the beautiful Charlotte Aglaé and the Prince de Piémont. Mademoiselle de Valois rebelled again, but this time in vain; the regent, departing from his usual good-natured indulgence, this time insisted, and the poor lovers lost all hope, when an unexpected event broke off the negotiations. Madame, the mother of the regent, with her German frankness, had written to the Queen of Sicily, one of her most constant correspondents, that she loved her too much not to warn her that the

princess who was destined for the young prince had a lover, and that that lover was the Duc de Richelieu. It may be supposed that this declaration put an end to the scheme.

The regent was at first exceedingly angry at this result of his mother's mania for writing letters; but he was not a man to persist long in an angry mood, and presently he was able to laugh at this latest epistolary escapade of Madame. And besides, at this time his attention was called to another very important matter; namely, Dubois's claim to be made an archbishop.

We have seen that, on Dubois's return from London, the affair had first been broached under the form of a joke, and how the regent had received the recommendation of the English king. But Dubois was not a man to be beaten by a first refusal. Cambrai was vacant by the death of the Cardinal la Trémouille, and was one of the richest archbishoprics in the Church. A hundred and fifty thousand francs a year were attached to it; and it was difficult to say whether Dubois was most tempted by the title of successor to Fénelon, or by the rich benefice attached to it.

Dubois, on the first opportunity, brought up the subject of the archbishopric. The regent again tried to turn it off with a joke, but Dubois became more positive and more pressing. The regent was unable to endure weariness, and Dubois began to weary him by his persistence; therefore, to dispose of him once for all, he challenged Dubois to find a prelate who would consecrate him.

"Is that all?" cried Dubois, joyously; "I have him within easy reach."

"Impossible!" said the regent, who did not believe the sycophancy of man could go to such lengths as that.

"You will see," said Dubois; and he ran out. In five minutes he returned.

"Well?" asked the regent.

"Well," answered Dubois, "I have secured our man."

"And who is the scoundrel who is willing to consecrate a fellow like you?"

"Your first almoner, Monseigneur."

"The Bishop of Nantes?"

"Neither more nor less."

"Tressan!"

"Himself."

"Impossible!"

"Here he is."

And at this moment the door was opened, and the Bishop of Nantes was announced.

"Come, Monsieur, come!" cried Dubois, running to him; "his royal Highness honors us both in naming me Archbishop of Cambrai, and in choosing you to consecrate me."

"Monsieur de Nantes," asked the regent, "is it true that you consent to make the abbé an archbishop?"

"Your Highness's wishes are commands for me, Monseigneur."

"But you know that he is neither sub-deacon, deacon, nor priest."

"Never mind, Monseigneur," cried Dubois, "here is Monsieur de Nantes, who will tell you that all these orders may be conferred in a day."

"But there is no example of such a thing."

"Yes, — Saint Ambroise."

"Then, my dear Abbé," said the regent, laughing, "if you have all the fathers of the Church with you, I have nothing more to say, and I abandon you to Monsieur de Tressan."

"I will give him back to you with the cross and mitre, Monseigneur."

"But you must have the grade of licentiate," continued the regent, who began to be amused at the discussion.

"I have a promise from the University of Orléans."

"But you must have attestations."

"Is there not Besons?"

"A certificate of good life and manners."

"I will have one signed by Noailles."

"No; there I defy you, Abbé."

"Then your Highness will give me one. The signature of the regent of France must have as much weight at Rome as that of a wicked cardinal."

"Dubois," said the regent, "a little more respect, if you please, for the princes of the Church."

"You are right, Monseigneur. There is no saying what one may become."

"You a cardinal!" cried the regent, laughing.

"Since your Highness will not give me the blue ribbon," said Dubois, "I must content myself with the red, until I can do better."

"Better! Cardinal!"

"Stay! why should I not some day be Pope?"

"True, Borgia was a pope."

"May God give us both a long life, Monseigneur, and you will see that and many other things."

"*Pardieu!*" said the regent, "you know that I laugh at death."

"Alas! too much."

"Well, you will make a poltroon of me by curiosity."

"There would be no harm in that; and to begin, Monseigneur would do well to discontinue his nocturnal excursions."

"Why?"

"In the first place, because they endanger his life."

"What does that matter?"

"Then for another reason."

"What?"

"Because," said Dubois, assuming a hypocritical air, "they are a subject of scandal for the Church."

"Go to the devil!"

"You see, Monsieur," said Dubois, turning to Tressan, "in the midst of what libertines and hardened sinners I am obliged to live. I hope that your Eminence will consider my position, and will not be too severe upon me."

"We will do our best, Monseigneur," said Tressan.

"And when?" asked Dubois, who was unwilling to lose an hour.

"As soon as you are ready."

"I ask for three days."

"Very well; on the fourth I will be at your orders."

"To-day is Saturday; on Wednesday, then."

"On Wednesday," answered Tressan.

"Only I warn you beforehand, Abbé," said the regent, "that one person of some importance will be absent at your consecration."

"And who will dare to do me that injury?"

"I shall."

"You, Monseigneur! You will be there, and in your official gallery."

"I say that I will not."

"I bet a thousand louis."

"And I give you my word of honor."

"I double my bet."

"Insolent!"

"Till Wednesday, Monsieur de Tressan; till my consecration, Monseigneur." And Dubois left the room

highly delighted, and spread about everywhere the news of his nomination.

But Dubois was wrong on one point; namely, the adhesion of the Cardinal de Noailles. No menace or promise could draw from him the attestation to good life and morals which Dubois flattered himself he should obtain at his hands. It is true that he was the only one who dared to make this holy and noble opposition to the scandal with which the Church was menaced. The University of Orléans gave the licenses, and everything was ready on the appointed day. Dubois left at five o'clock in the morning, in a hunting-dress, for Pontoise, where he found Monsieur de Tressan, who, according to his promise, bestowed on him the sub-deaconship, the deaconship, and the priesthood. At twelve all was finished; and at four, after having attended the regent's council, which was held at the old Louvre in consequence of the measles having, as we have said, attacked the Tuileries, Dubois returned home in the dress of an archbishop.

The first person whom he saw in his room was La Fillon. In her double capacity, as agent of his secret police and of his public loves, she had admittance to his room at all hours; and in spite of the solemnity of the day, as she had said that she had business of importance to communicate, they had not dared to refuse her.

"Ah!" cried Dubois, on perceiving his old friend, "a lucky meeting."

"*Pardieu!* my dear gossip," answered La Fillon, "if you are ungrateful enough to forget your old friends, I am not stupid enough to forget mine, particularly when they rise in the world."

"Ah! tell me," said Dubois, beginning to pull off his sacerdotal ornaments, "do you count on continuing to call me your gossip now that I am an archbishop?"

"More than ever. And I count on it so strongly that the first time the regent enters my house I shall ask him for an abbey, that we may still be on an equality one with the other."

"He comes to your house, then? The libertine!"

"Alas! no longer for me, my dear gossip. Ah, the good time is passed! But I hope that, thanks to you, it will return, and that the house will feel your elevation."

"Oh, my poor gossip!" said Dubois, stooping down in order that La Fillon might unclasp his frock, "you see that now things are much changed, and that I can no longer visit you as I used to."

"You are proud. Philippe comes there."

"Philippe is only regent of France, and I am an archbishop. Do you understand? I want a mistress in her own house, where I can go without scandal, — like Madame de Tencin, for example."

"Yes, who will deceive you for Richelieu."

"And how do you know that she will not deceive Richelieu for me?"

"Oh, very good! And will she do double tasks, perchance? Will she perform both the services of love and those of the police?"

"Perhaps. But speaking of police," answered Dubois, continuing to undress, "do you know that yours have slept infernally during three or four months, and that if this continues I shall be obliged to withdraw your stipend."

"Ah, coward!" cried La Fillon; "this is the way you treat your old friends. I came to make a revelation; well, you shall not have it."

"A revelation! and what about?"

"Pshaw! take away my pay, — scoundrel that you are!"

"Is it a matter relating to Spain?" asked the arch-

bishop, frowning, and feeling instinctively that the danger came from that quarter.

"It relates to nothing at all. Good-evening." And La Fillon made toward the door.

"Come here," said Dubois, stepping toward his desk; and the two old friends, who understood each other so well, looked at each other and laughed.

"Come, come," said La Fillon, "I see that all is not lost, and that there is yet some good in you. Come, open this little desk and show me what it contains, and I will open my mouth and show you what I have in my heart."

Dubois took out a *rouleau* of a hundred louis, and showed it to La Fillon.

"How much is it?" said she. "Come, tell the truth; however, I shall count after you, to be sure."

"Two thousand four hundred francs; that is a pretty penny, it seems to me."

"Yes, for an abbé, but not for an archbishop."

"Do you not know to what an extent the finances are involved?"

"Well, what does that matter, you humbug, when Law is going to make millions for us?"

"Would you like in exchange ten thousand francs in Mississippi bonds?"

"Thanks, my dear, I prefer the hundred louis. Give them to me; I am a good woman, and another day you will be more generous."

"Well, what have you to tell me? Come!"

"First promise me one thing."

"What is it?"

"That as the matter concerns an old friend of mine, he shall come to no harm."

"But if your old friend is a beggar who deserves to be hanged, why the devil should you cheat him of his due?"

"I have my own reasons."

"Go along; I promise nothing."

"Well, good-evening, then. Here are the hundred louis."

"Ah, you are getting scrupulous all at once!"

"Not at all; but I am under obligations to this man. He started me in the world."

"He may boast of having done a good thing for society that day."

"Rather, my friend; and he shall never have cause to repent it, for I will not speak a word to-day unless his life is safe."

"Well, safe it shall be, I promise you. Are you content?"

"By what do you promise it to me?"

"On the faith of an honest man."

"Ah, you are going to deceive me."

"Do you know that you are very tiresome?"

"Oh! I am very tiresome. Well, good-by."

"Gossip, I will have you arrested."

"What do I care?"

"You shall be sent to prison."

"That is a good joke."

"I will leave you there to rot."

"Till you rot yourself; that will not be a long time."

"Well, what do you want?"

"My captain's life."

"You shall have it."

"On what faith?"

"On the faith of an archbishop."

"I want a better."

"On the faith of an abbé."

"Better still."

"On the faith of Dubois."

"That will do. First, I must tell you that my captain is the most threadbare captain in the kingdom."

"*Diable!* there is some competition, however."

"True; but he takes the prize."

"Continue."

"Well, you must know that lately my captain has become as rich as Crœsus."

"He must have robbed some farmer-general."

"Incapable. Killed, maybe, but robbed! — what do you take him for?"

"Well, then, where do you think he gets that money?"

"Do you know the different coinages?"

"Yes."

"Where does this come from, then?"

"Ah, ah, Spanish doubloons!"

"And without alloy, with the effigy of King Charles II. Doubloons which are worth forty-eight francs if they are worth a penny, and which run from his pockets like a stream, poor dear fellow!"

"And when did your captain begin to sweat gold like that?"

"The day after the regent was nearly carried off in the Rue des Bons-Enfans. Do you understand the apologue, gossip?"

"Yes; and why have you not told me before to-day?"

"Because his pockets were full then. They are now nearly empty; and it is a good time to find out where he goes to fill them."

"And you wished to give him time to empty them?"

"Well, all the world must live."

"And so they shall; even your captain. But you understand that I must know what he does?"

"Day by day."

"And which of your girls does he love?"

"All, when he has money."

"And when he has none?"

"La Normande; she is his true friend."

"I know her; she is as sharp as a needle."

"Yes; but you must not reckon on her."

"Why not?"

"She loves him, the little fool."

"Ah, he is a lucky fellow!"

"And he merits it. He has the heart of a prince; he is not like you, old miser."

"Oh, you know that sometimes I am more lavish than the prodigal son, and it depends on you to give me occasion to be so."

"I will do my best."

"Then day by day I shall know what your captain does?"

"You shall."

"On what faith?"

"On the faith of an honest woman."

"Something better."

"On the faith of Fillon."

"That will do."

"Adieu, Monseigneur the Archbishop."

"Adieu, gossip."

La Fillon went toward the door, but as she was going out an usher entered.

"Monseigneur," said he, "here is a man who wants to speak to your Eminence."

"And who is he, idiot?"

"An employee of the royal library, who, in his spare time, makes copies."

"And what does he want?"

"He says that he has an important revelation to make to your Eminence."

"Oh! it is some poor fellow begging."

"No, Monseigneur; he says that it is a political affair."

"*Diable!* about what?"

"About Spain."

"Send him in; and you, gossip, go into this closet."

"What for?"

"Suppose my writer and your captain should know each other?"

"Ah, that would be droll."

"Come, get in quickly."

La Fillon entered the closet which Dubois showed her. An instant afterward the usher opened the door and announced Monsieur Jean Buvat.

We must now show how this important personage came to be received in private audience by the Archbishop of Cambrai.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE PRINCE DE LISTHNAY'S ACCOMPLICE.

We left Buvat going up to his own room, with his papers in his hand, to fulfil his promise to the Prince de Listhnay; and this promise was so scrupulously kept that by seven o'clock the next evening the copy was finished and taken to the Rue du Bac. He then received from the same august hands some more work, which he returned with the same punctuality; so that the Prince de Listhnay, feeling confidence in a man who had given such proofs of exactitude, took from his desk a package of papers larger than the first two, and in order not to disturb Buvat every day, and also, doubtless, that he might not be disturbed himself, instructed him to return them all at the same time, — which would involve an interval of three or four days before Buvat should make his next visit.

Buvat was delighted with this mark of confidence, and on his return set himself gayly to his work; and although he found that he did not understand a word of Spanish, he could now read it easily, so that his work, being purely mechanical, left him free to sing his little song, while at the same time he continued copying his memorial. It was therefore almost with a sense of disappointment that on completing his copy of the first paper, he came to one that was written wholly in French. He had become accustomed to the foreign language by his five days' work, and to him every interruption of habit was annoying. But Buvat, faithful to duty, made ready to go on scrupu-

lously with his work; and although the paper was not numbered, and had the appearance of having been slipped in by mistake, he none the less resolved to copy it in its turn, in accordance with the maxim, "Quod abundat non vitiat." He therefore renewed his pen by a light stroke with his penknife, and began copying the following words: —

"Confidential.

"For his Excellency Monsieur Alberoni in person.

"Nothing is more important than to make sure of the places near the Pyrenees, and of the noblemen who reside in those cantons."

"In those cantons," repeated Buvat; then, taking a hair from his pen, he continued: —

"To gain or master the garrison of Bayonne."

"What is that?" muttered Buvat. "Is not Bayonne a French town? Let us see, — let us see;" and he continued: —

"The Marquis de P—— is governor of D——. The intentions of that nobleman are known. When it is decided, it will be necessary for him to triple his expenditure, in order to attract the aristocracy; he ought to scatter rewards.

"In Normandy, Carentan is an important post. Pursue the same course with the governor of that town as with the Marquis of P——; go further: promise his officers suitable rewards.

"Do the same in all the provinces."

"Eh! what!" said Buvat, re-reading what he had just written; "what does this mean? It seems to me that it would be prudent to read it all before going further." And he read as follows: —

"To supply this expenditure we must reckon on at least three hundred thousand francs the first month, and afterward a hundred thousand per month, paid punctually."

"Paid punctually!" murmured Buvat, breaking off. "It is evidently not by France that these payments are to be made, since France is so poor that she has not paid me my nine hundred francs' salary for five years. Let us see, — let us see;" and he resumed: —

"That expenditure, which will cease when peace is established, will enable his Catholic Majesty to act with certainty in case of war.

"Spain will be only an auxiliary. The army of Philip V. is in France"

"What! what! what!" said Buvat; "and I did not even know that it had crossed the frontier."

"A body of about ten thousand Spaniards is more than sufficient, with the presence of the king. But we must be able to count on being able to seduce at least half of the Duc d'Orléans' army. This is most important, and cannot be done without money. A present of one hundred thousand francs is necessary for each battalion and squadron. Twenty battalions would be two millions; with that sum one might form a trustworthy army, and destroy that of the enemy.

"It is almost certain that the subjects most devoted to the King of Spain will not be employed in the army which will march against him. Let them disperse themselves through the provinces; there they will act usefully. To restore to them their standing, it may be necessary for his Catholic Majesty to send orders in blank for his minister in Paris to fill.

"In consequence of the multiplicity of orders to be given, it will be convenient for the ambassador to have authority to sign for the King of Spain.

"It would be well, moreover, if his Catholic Majesty were to sign his orders as a French prince; the title is his own.

"Prepare funds for an army of thirty thousand men, whom his Majesty will find brave, skilful, and disciplined.

"This money should arrive in France by the last of May or the first of June, and be distributed directly in the capitals of provinces, such as Nantes, Bayonne, etc.

"Do not allow the French ambassador to leave Spain. His presence will answer for the safety of those who declare themselves."[1]

"*Sabre de bois!*" cried Buvat, rubbing his eyes; "but this is a conspiracy, — a conspiracy against the person of the regent, and against the safety of the kingdom. Oh, oh!"

Buvat fell into profound meditation.

Indeed, the position was critical. Buvat mixed up in a conspiracy! Buvat charged with a State secret! Buvat holding in his hands, perhaps, the fate of nations! Less than this was needed to throw the worthy man into a state of strange perplexity.

Thus seconds, minutes, hours, elapsed before Buvat, who sat with his head leaning against the back of his chair, and his eyes fixed on the ceiling, made the least movement. From time to time, however, a deep breath — like an expression of astonishment — escaped his breast. Ten o'clock, eleven, midnight, sounded. Buvat thought that sleep would bring him aid, and he determined to go to bed. It is needless to say that his copying came to an end when he saw that the original was assuming an illegal character.

Buvat could not sleep; the poor fellow tossed from side to side, but whenever he closed his eyes he saw the horrible plan of the conspiracy written upon the wall in letters of fire. Once or twice, overcome by fatigue, he fell asleep; but he had no sooner lost consciousness than he dreamed, — the first time that he was arrested by the watch as an accomplice in the conspiracy; the second, that he was stabbed by the conspirators themselves. The first time Buvat awoke trembling; the second time bathed

[1] This document is copied literally from the original in the archives of foreign affairs.

in perspiration. These two impressions had been so terrible, that he lighted his candle, and determined to wait for day, without another attempt to sleep.

The day came, but far from dispelling the phantoms of the night, it only gave them a more terrific reality. At the least noise which he heard in the street Buvat trembled. Some one knocked at the street-door, and Buvat thought he should faint. Nanette opened the door of his chamber, and he uttered a cry. Nanette ran to him, and asked what was the matter; but he answered only by shaking his head, and saying with a sigh, "Ah, my poor Nanette, we live in very sad times."

He stopped directly, fearing he had said too much. He was too preoccupied to go down to breakfast with Bathilde. Besides, he feared lest the young girl should perceive his uneasiness, and ask the cause; and as he did not know how to keep anything from her, he would have told her all, and she would then have become his accomplice. He had his coffee sent up to him, under pretext of having an overwhelming amount of work to do, and that he was going to work during breakfast. As Bathilde's love-affair found advantage in this absence, she made no objection to it.

A few minutes before ten Buvat left for his office. If his fears had been strong in his own house, it may be easily understood that when he was in the street they changed into terrors. At every crossing, at the end of every court, behind every angle, he thought that he saw agents of the police lying in wait, ready to take him by the collar. At the corner of the Place des Victoires a musketeer appeared, coming from the Rue Pagevin, and Buvat gave such a start on seeing him that he almost fell under the wheels of a carriage. At last, after many alarms, he reached the library, bowed almost to the ground before

the sentinel, darted up the stairs, gained his office, and falling exhausted on his seat, he shut up in his drawer all the papers of the Prince de Listhnay, which he had brought with him for fear the police should search his house during his absence. Finding himself in safety, he heaved a sigh, which would not have failed to betray him to his colleagues as being a prey to the greatest agitation, if he had not, as usual, arrived before them.

Buvat had the idea that no personal preoccupation, whether grave or gay, ought to disturb a clerk in the execution of his duty. Therefore he applied himself to his work, apparently as if nothing had happened, but really in a state of moral perturbation impossible to describe.

This work consisted, as usual, in classifying and labelling books. A fire having broken out a few days previously in one of the halls of the library, three or four thousand volumes had been carried out of reach of the flames, and thrown down promiscuously on the floor, and were now to be restored to their proper places. As it was a particularly tedious business, Buvat had been selected for it, and had hitherto acquitted himself with an intelligence and assiduity which had gained for him the commendations of his superiors, and the raillery of his colleagues.

In spite of the urgency of the work, Buvat rested some minutes to recover himself; but as soon as he saw the door open, and one of his colleagues enter and go to his place, he rose instinctively, took a pen, dipped it in the ink, took a handful of parchment labels, went toward the remaining books, took the first which came to hand, and continued his classification, muttering meanwhile, according to his custom while thus employed:—

"'The Breviary of Lovers,' printed at Liége in 1712; no printer's name. Ah, *mon Dieu!* what amusement can

Christians possibly find in reading such books? It would be better if they were all burned in the Place de Grève by the hand of the public hangman! — prrrouu! why in the devil do I think of him? Who, then, is this Prince de Listhnay, who has made me copy such things, and who is the young man who, under pretext of doing me a service, introduced me to such a scoundrel? Come, come! this is not the place to think about that. How pleasant it is, writing on parchment! the pen glides as if over silk. What is the next? 'Angélique, or Secret Pleasures,' with illustrations; and what illustrations they are! 'London.' Such books should be forbidden to pass the frontier. A few days from now there will be fine doings on the frontier. 'Make sure of the places near the Pyrenees, and of the noblemen who reside in those cantons.' It may be hoped that places will not allow themselves to be taken like that. What the devil! there are still faithful subjects in France. Ah, cursed prince! May you be taken, hanged, quartered! But if on being arrested, he should denounce me! *Sabre de bois!* it is possible."

"Well, Monsieur Buvat," said the head clerk, "and what have you been doing for the last five minutes, with your arms crossed, and your eyes rolling as if you were frightened?"

"Nothing, Monsieur Ducoudray, nothing. I was planning a new mode of classification."

"A new mode of classification! Are you turned reformer? Do you wish to make a revolution, Monsieur Buvat?"

"I! a revolution!" cried Buvat, with terror. "A revolution, Monsieur! — never, oh, never! Thank God, my devotion to Monseigneur le Régent is known, — a disinterested devotion, since he has not paid me for five years, as you know; and if ever I should have the misfortune

to be accused of such a thing, I hope, Monsieur, that I should find witnesses, friends, who would answer for me."

"Very good, very good. Meantime, Monsieur Buvat, go on with your work. You know that it is urgent. All those books are in our way, and by four o'clock to-morrow they must be on their shelves."

"They shall be, Monsieur, they shall be, though I spend the night at it."

"Good fellow, Père Buvat," said an employee who had been there half an hour, and had not yet finished sharpening his pen. "He proposes to spend the night here, knowing there is a rule forbidding it for fear of fire. But no matter; it sounds well, and gives the appearance of zeal, and that pleases the chiefs. Oh, you are a cunning fellow, Père Buvat!"

Buvat was too much accustomed to that style of address to be disturbed by it. After placing where they belonged the first two volumes he had labelled, he took up the third, and continued: —

"'Conspiracy of Monsieur de Cinq-Mars' — *diable! diable!* I have heard of that. He was a gallant gentleman, who was in correspondence with Spain, — that cursed Spain. What business has it to mix itself up eternally with our affairs? It is true that this time it is said that Spain 'will only be an auxiliary;' but an auxiliary who takes possession of our towns, and who debauches our soldiers, appears to me very much like an enemy. 'Conspiracy of Monsieur de Cinq-Mars, followed by a History of his Death, and that of Monsieur de Thou, condemned for not revealing it. By an Eye-Witness.' For not revealing! It is true, no doubt, for the law is positive. Whoever does not reveal is an accomplice, — myself, for instance. I am the accomplice of the Prince de Listhnay; and if they cut off his head, they will cut off mine too.

No, they will only hang me; I am not noble. Hanged! it is impossible; they would never go to such extremities in my case. Besides, I have made up my mind; I will declare all. But then I shall be an informer; never! But then I shall be hanged — oh, oh!"

"What in the devil is the matter with you to-day, Père Buvat?" said the colleague of the worthy man, who had finished sharpening his pen. "You are spoiling your cravat. Are you trying to strangle yourself? Well, don't stand on ceremony. Take off your coat meanwhile. Go ahead, Père Buvat; go ahead."

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen," said Buvat; "I did it mechanically. I did not mean to offend you."

"That 's all right."

Buvat, after readjusting his cravat, and placing on its shelf "The Conspiracy of Monsieur de Cinq-Mars," reached out his trembling hand for another volume.

"'Art of Plucking the Fowl without Making it cry out.' This no doubt is a cook-book. If I had time I would copy some good receipt and give it to Nanette for the improvement of our Sunday dinners; for now that money is coming in again, — yes, it is coming in; but, my God, from what a source! Oh, I will return his money to him, and his papers too, to the last line. Yes, but he will not restore mine to me, — more than forty pages of my writing! and the Cardinal de Richelieu needed only five lines of a man's writing to hang him! There is enough there to hang me a hundred times. And then there is no way of denying that writing, that superb writing: it is well known; it is obviously mine. But come, this is not what is before me. 'Art of Plucking the Fowl without Making it cry out. Paris, 1709: Comon, Rue du Bac, No. 110.' Come, here I am, writing the prince's address! Decidedly, I am losing my head;

I am going mad. But if I should go and declare all, while refusing to name him who gave me the papers, — yes, but they will force me to tell everything; they have means to do that. But I am wandering; come, Buvat, my friend, attend to business."

"'Conspiracy of the Chevalier Louis de Rohan.' Oh, I come to nothing but conspiracies! That is the poor fellow who was executed in 1674, four years before I was born. My mother saw him die. Poor fellow! — she has often told me about it. And they hanged at the same time a tall, slim man dressed all in black. What was his name? Ah, good, I have the book here. Ah, yes, Van den Enden. Here it is: 'Copy of a Plan of Government found among the Papers of Monsieur de Rohan, and entirely written by Van den Enden.' Ah, *mon Dieu!* yes; that is just my case. He was hanged for having copied a plan. Oh, I shall die! 'Procès-verbal of the Torture of François-Affinius Van den Enden.' If they read one day, at the end of the conspiracy of the Prince de Listhnay, 'Procès-verbal of the Torture of Jean Buvat.' Ouf!"

"In the year one thousand six hundred and seventy-four, etc., we, Claude Bazin, Chevalier de Bezons, and Auguste-Robert de Pomereu, assisted by Louis Le Mazier, counsellor and secretary to the king, etc., have proceeded to the château of the Bastille, and being in one of the towers of that château, have before us François-Affinius Van den Enden, condemned to death, and to be subjected to the question ordinary and extraordinary; and after he has taken oath to tell the truth, we have shown him that he has not told all that he knows concerning the conspiracy and the rebellious plans of the Sieurs Rohan and Latréaumont. He replies that he has told everything he knows; and that being a stranger to the conspiracy, having only copied a few papers relating to it, he can say nothing further. Upon that we have applied to him the *brodequins*."

"Monsieur," said Buvat to the chief clerk, "may I ask you, who are so well informed, what the instrument of torture is which is called *brodequin?*"

"My dear Monsieur Buvat," replied the clerk, visibly pleased by the compliment the good man had addressed to him, "I can tell you all about it, for last year I saw Duchauffour subjected to the torture."

"Then, Monsieur, I am curious to know — "

"*Brodequins*, my dear Buvat," replied Monsieur Ducoudray, with an air of importance, "are nothing else but four boards, something like the staves of a cask."

"Well?"

"They place your right leg, — when I say 'your,' you understand, my dear Buvat, that I am speaking generally, and do not intend a personal application, — they put your right leg, then, between two boards, then fasten the boards in place with cords, then do the same with the left leg, then draw the two legs together, and between the middle boards introduce wedges, which are driven in with a mallet, — five for the question ordinary, ten for the question extraordinary."

"But," said Buvat, with a changed voice, "Monsieur Ducoudray, that must put the legs in a deplorable condition."

"Why, yes, it breaks your legs all to pieces. At the sixth wedge, for example, Duchauffour's legs were broken, and at the eighth the marrow of the bone ran out with the blood."

Buvat turned deathly pale, and sat down on the step-ladder to keep himself from falling. "*Jésus!*" he murmured, "what are you telling me, Monsieur Ducoudray?"

"The exact truth, my dear Buvat. Read the torture of Urbain Grandier, and then you will see if I am imposing on you."

"I have one here, — that of poor Monsieur Van den Enden."

"Well, read, then."

Buvat turned his eyes upon the book and read: —

"*At the first wedge:* Affirms that he has said the truth; that he has nothing to add; that he suffers innocently.

"*At the second wedge:* Says that he has declared all he knows.

"*At the third wedge:* Cries out, 'Ah, my God! my God! I have told all that I know.'

"*At the fourth wedge:* Says that he can confess nothing more than is already known; that is to say, that he copied a plan of government that was given him by the Chevalier de Rohan."

Buvat wiped his brow with his handkerchief.

"*At the fifth wedge:* Says, 'Oh, oh, my God!' but says nothing more.

"*At the sixth wedge:* Cries, 'Oh, my God!'

"*At the seventh wedge:* Cries, 'I am dead!'

"*At the eighth wedge:* Cries, 'Ah, my God! I cannot tell anything, for I have nothing to tell.'

"*At the ninth wedge:* Says, 'My God! my God! Why torture me so? You know well that I can tell nothing. Since I am condemned to death, kill me!'

"*At the tenth wedge:* Says, 'Oh, gentlemen, what do you want me to say? Oh, I thank thee, my God! I die, I die!'"

"Well, well, what is the matter, Buvat?" said Ducoudray, seeing the good man shake and grow pale. "Are you ill?"

"Ah, Monsieur Ducoudray," said Buvat, dropping the book, and dragging himself to a seat, as if his legs, already broken, could sustain him no longer, — "ah, Monsieur Ducoudray, I feel I am going to faint."

"That comes of reading instead of working," said an employee.

"Well, Père Buvat, are you better?" asked Ducoudray.

"Yes, Monsieur, for my resolution is taken, taken irrevocably. It would not be just, by Heaven, that I should bear the punishment for a crime which I never committed. I owe it to society, to my ward, to myself. Monsieur Ducoudray, if the curator asks for me, you will tell him that I have gone out on pressing business."

And Buvat drew the roll of paper from the drawer, pressed his hat on his head, took his stick, and went out with the majesty of despair.

"Do you know where he has gone?" asked the employee.

"No," answered Ducoudray.

"I will tell you: to play at bowls at the Champs-Élysées, or at Porcherons."

The employee was wrong; he had gone neither to the Champs-Élysées nor to Porcherons. He had gone to Dubois.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE FOX AND THE GOOSE.

"MONSIEUR JEAN BUVAT," said the usher. Dubois stretched out his viper's head, darted a look at the opening which was left between the usher and the door, and behind the official introducer perceived a little fat, pale man, whose legs shook under him, and who coughed to give himself courage. A glance sufficed to show Dubois the sort of person he had to deal with.

"Let him come in," said Dubois.

The usher stood aside, and Jean Buvat appeared in the doorway.

"Come in, come in," said Dubois.

"You do me honor, Monsieur," stammered Buvat, without moving from his place.

"Shut the door, and leave us," said Dubois to the usher.

The usher obeyed, and th door striking Buvat unexpectedly, made him jump. Though staggered for a moment, he steadied himself on his legs, and became once more immovable, looking at Dubois with an expression of astonishment.

In truth, Dubois was a curious sight. Of his episcopal costume he had retained only the inferior part; so that he was in his shirt, with black breeches and violet stockings.

upset all Buvat's preconceived notions. What he
)efore his eyes was neither a minister nor an arch-
ρ, but seemed much more like an orang-outang than
.n.

"Well, Monsieur," said Dubois, sitting down and crossing his legs, and taking his foot in his hands, "you have asked to speak to me; here I am."

"That is to say, Monsieur," said Buvat, "I asked to speak to Monseigneur the Archbishop of Cambrai."

"Well, I am he."

"What! you, Monseigneur?" cried Buvat, taking his hat in both hands, and bowing almost to the floor. "Excuse me, but I did not recognize your Eminence. It is true that this is the first time I have had the honor of seeing you. Still — hum! at that air of majesty — hum, hum — I ought to have understood — "

"Your name?" asked Dubois, interrupting the good man's compliments.

"Jean Buvat, at your service."

"You are — ?"

"An employee at the library."

"And you have some revelations to make to me concerning Spain?"

"That is to say, Monseigneur — This is how it is. As my office-work leaves me six hours in the evening and four in the morning, and as Heaven has blessed me with a very good handwriting, I make copies."

"Yes, I understand," said Dubois; "and some one has given you suspicious papers to copy; so you have brought these suspicious papers to me, have you not?"

"In this roll, Monseigneur, in this roll," said Buvat, extending it toward Dubois.

Dubois made a single bound from his chair to Buvat, took the roll, and sat down at a desk, and with a turn of the hand having torn off the string and the wrapper, found the papers in question. The first on which he lighted were in Spanish; but as Dubois had been sent twice to Spain, and knew something of the language of Calderon

and Lopez de Vega, he saw at the first glance how important these papers were. Indeed, they were neither more nor less than the protestation of the nobility, the list of officers who sought service under the King of Spain, and the manifesto prepared by the Cardinal de Polignac and the Marquis de Pompadour to rouse the kingdom. These different documents were addressed directly to Philip V.; and a little note — which Dubois recognized as in Cellamare's handwriting — announced that the *dénouement* of the conspiracy was near at hand; he informed his Catholic Majesty, from day to day, of all the important events which could advance or retard the scheme. Then came, finally, that famous plan of the conspirators which we have already given to our readers, and which — left by an oversight among the papers which had been translated into Spanish — had opened Buvat's eyes. Near the plan, in the good man's best writing, was the copy which he had begun to make, and which was broken off at the words, "Act thus in all the provinces."

Buvat had followed all the working of Dubois's face with a certain anxiety; he had seen its expressions change from astonishment to joy, then from joy to impassibility. Dubois, as he continued to read, had passed successively one leg over the other, had bitten his lips, and pinched the end of his nose; but all this had been utterly untranslatable to Buvat, and at the end of the reading he no more understood the face of the archbishop than at the end of the copy he had understood the Spanish original. As to Dubois, he saw that this man had come to furnish him with the beginning of a most important secret, and he was meditating on the best means of making him furnish the end also. This was the signification of the crossed legs, the bitten lips, and the pinched nose. At last he appeared to have taken his resolution. A charming

benevolence overspread his countenance; and turning toward the good man, who had remained standing respectfully, "Take a seat, my dear Monsieur Buvat," said he.

"Thank you, Monseigneur," answered Buvat, trembling; "I am not fatigued."

"Pardon, pardon," said Dubois, "but your legs shake."

Indeed, since he had read the report of the torture of Van den Enden, Buvat had retained in his legs a nervous trembling, somewhat like that which may be observed in dogs that have the distemper.

"The fact is, Monseigneur," said Buvat, "that I don't know what has come to me in the last two hours, but I find a great difficulty in standing upright."

"Sit down, then, and let us talk like two friends."

Buvat looked at Dubois with an air of stupefaction which at any other time would have had the effect of making him burst out laughing; but now he did not seem to notice it, and drawing forward a chair which was within his reach, he repeated with his hand the invitation which he had given with his voice. There was no way of drawing back; the good man approached trembling, and sat down on the edge of his chair, put his hat on the floor, took his cane between his legs, and waited. All this, however, was not executed without a violent internal struggle, as his face testified, which, white as a lily when he came in, had now become as red as a peony.

"My dear Monsieur Buvat, you say that you make copies?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"And that brings you in —?"

"Very little, Monseigneur, very little."

"You have, nevertheless, a superb handwriting, Monsieur Buvat."

"Yes; but all the world does not appreciate the value of that talent as your Eminence does."

"That is true; but you are employed at the library?"

"I have that honor."

"And your place brings you — ?"

"Oh, my place, — that is another thing, Monseigneur; it brings me in nothing at all, seeing that for five years the cashier has told us at the end of each month that the king was too poor to pay us."

"And you still remained in the service of his Majesty? That was well done, Monsieur Buvat; that was well done."

Buvat rose, saluted Dubois, and reseated himself.

"And perhaps all the while you have a family to support, — a wife, children?"

"No, Monseigneur; up to the present time I have remained a bachelor."

"But you have relatives, of course?"

"No, Monseigneur; but I have a ward, — a charming young person, full of talent, who sings like Mademoiselle Bury, and who draws like Monsieur Greuze."

"Ah, ah! and what is the name of your ward, Monsieur Buvat?"

"Bathilde — Bathilde du Rocher, Monseigneur; she is a young lady of noble family. Her father was squire to Monsieur le Régent when he was still Duc de Chartres, and had the misfortune to be killed at the battle of Almanza."

"Thus I see you have your charges, my dear Buvat."

"Is it of Bathilde that you speak, Monseigneur? Oh, no, Bathilde is not a charge; on the contrary, poor dear girl, she brings in more than she costs. Bathilde a charge! Firstly, every month Monsieur Papillon, the dealer in colors at the corner of the Rue Cléry, you know, Mon-

seigneur, gives her eighty francs for two drawings; then — "

"What I mean is, my dear Buvat, that you are not rich."

"Oh, rich! no, Monseigneur, I am not. But I wish I were, for poor Bathilde's sake; and if you could obtain from Monseigneur that out of the first money which comes into the State coffers he would pay me my arrears, or at least something on account — "

"And to how much do your arrears amount?"

"To four thousand seven hundred francs, two sous, and eight centimes, Monseigneur."

"Is that all?" said Dubois; "that is nothing."

"Indeed, Monseigneur, it is a great deal; and the proof is that the king cannot pay it."

"But that will not make you rich."

"It will make me comfortable; and I do not conceal from you, Monseigneur, that if, from the first money which comes into the treasury — "

"My dear Buvat," said Dubois, "I have something better than that to offer you."

"Offer it, Monseigneur."

"You have your fortune at your fingers' ends."

"My mother always told me so, Monseigneur."

"That proves," said Dubois, "what a sensible woman your mother was."

"Well, Monseigneur, I am ready; what must I do?"

"Ah, *mon Dieu!* the thing is very simple; you will make me, now and here, copies of all these."

"But, Monseigneur — "

"That is not all, my dear Monsieur Buvat. You will take back the copies and the originals to the person who gave you these papers, as if nothing had happened; you will take all that that person gives you; you will bring them to me directly, so that I may read them; then you

will do the same with those other papers as with these, — and so on indefinitely, till I say, Enough."

"But, Monseigneur, it seems to me that in acting thus I should betray the confidence of the prince."

"Ah! it is with the prince that you have business, Monsieur Buvat? and what may this prince be called?"

"Oh, Monseigneur, it appears to me that in telling you his name I denounce —"

"Well, and what have you come here for, then?"

"Monseigneur, I have come here to inform you of the danger to which his Highness is exposed, that is all."

"Indeed," said Dubois, in a bantering tone, "and you imagine you are going to stop there?"

"I wish to do so, Monseigneur."

"There is only one misfortune, that it is impossible, my dear Monsieur Buvat."

"What! impossible?"

"Entirely."

"Monseigneur, I am an honest man."

"Monsieur Buvat, you are a simpleton."

"Monsieur, I wish nevertheless to keep silence."

"My dear Monsieur, you will speak."

"And if I speak, I shall be an informer against the prince."

"If you do not speak, you are his accomplice."

"His accomplice, Monseigneur! and in what crime?"

"In the crime of high treason. Ah! the police have had their eyes on you this long time, Monsieur Buvat!"

"On me, Monseigneur?"

"Yes, on you; under the pretext that they do not pay you your salary, you entertain seditious proposals against the State."

"Oh, Monseigneur, how can they say so?"

"Under the pretext of their not paying you your salary, you have been making copies of incendiary documents for the last four days."

"Monseigneur, I found it out only yesterday; I don't understand Spanish."

"You do understand it, Monsieur."

"I swear, Monseigneur."

"I tell you that you do understand it, and the proof is that there is not a mistake in your copies. But that is not all."

"What! not all?"

"No, that is not all. Is this Spanish? Look, Monsieur," and he read:—

"Nothing is more important than to make sure of the places near the Pyrenees, and of the noblemen who reside in those cantons."

"But, Monseigneur, it was just that which led me to discover—"

"Monsieur Buvat, they have sent men to the galleys for less than you have done."

"Monseigneur!"

"Monsieur Buvat, men have been hanged who were less guilty than you."

"Monseigneur! Monseigneur!"

"Monsieur Buvat, they have broken on the wheel—"

"Mercy, Monseigneur, mercy!"

"Mercy to a criminal like you, Monsieur Buvat! I shall send you to the Bastille, and Mademoiselle Bathilde to St. Lazare."

"To St. Lazare! Bathilde to St. Lazare, Monseigneur! Bathilde to St. Lazare! and who has the right to do that?"

"I, Monsieur Buvat!"

"No, Monseigneur, you have not the right!" cried

Buvat, who could fear and suffer everything for himself, but who, at the thought of such infamy, from a worm became a serpent. "Bathilde is not a daughter of the people, Monseigneur! Bathilde is a lady of noble birth, the daughter of a man who saved the life of the regent; and when I represent to his Highness — "

"You will go first to the Bastille, Monsieur Buvat," said Dubois, pulling the bell so as nearly to break it, "and then we will see about Mademoiselle Bathilde."

"Monseigneur, what are you doing?"

"You will see." (The usher entered.) "An officer of police, and a carriage."

"Monseigneur," cried Buvat, "all that you wish — "

"Do as I have bid you," said Dubois.

The usher went out.

"Monseigneur," said Buvat, joining his hands, — "Monseigneur, I will obey."

"No, Monsieur Buvat. Ah! you wish for a trial, — you shall have one. You want a rope, — you shall not be disappointed."

"Monseigneur," cried Buvat, falling on his knees, "what must I do?"

"Hang, hang, hang!" continued Dubois.

"Monseigneur," said the usher, returning, "the carriage is at the door, and the officer in the anteroom."

"Monseigneur," said Buvat, twisting his short arms and tearing out the few yellow hairs which he had left, — "Monseigneur, will you be pitiless?"

"Ah! you will not tell me the name of the prince?"

"It is the Prince de Listhnay, Monseigneur."

"Ah! you will not tell me his address?"

"He lives at No. 110 Rue du Bac, Monseigneur."

"You will not make me copies of those papers?"

"I will do it, — I will do it this instant," said Buvat;

and he went and sat down before the desk, took a pen, dipped it in the ink, and taking some paper, began the first page with a superb capital. "I will do it, — I will do it, Monseigneur; only you will allow me to write to Bathilde that I shall not be home to dinner. Bathilde to the St. Lazare!" he muttered between his teeth. "*Sabre de bois!* he would have done as he said."

"Yes, Monsieur, I would have done that, and more too, for the safety of the State, as you will find out to your cost if you do not return these papers, and if you do not take the others, and if you do not come here every evening to copy them."

"But, Monseigneur," cried Buvat, in despair, "I cannot then go to my office."

"Well, then, you will not go to your office, — a great misfortune!"

"Not go to my office! but I have not missed a day for twelve years, Monseigneur."

"Well, I give you a month's leave."

"But I shall lose my place, Monseigneur."

"What will that matter to you, since they do not pay you?"

"But the honor of being a public functionary, Monseigneur! and, moreover, I love my books, I love my table, I love my armchair," cried Buvat, ready to cry at the thought of losing all that.

"Well, then, if you wish to keep your books, your table, and your chair, I advise you to obey me."

"Have I not already put myself at your service, Monseigneur?"

"Then you will do all that I wish?"

"Everything."

"Without breathing a word to any one?"

"I will be dumb."

"Not even to Mademoiselle Bathilde?"

"To her less than any one else, Monseigneur."

"That is well; on that condition I pardon you."

"Oh, Monseigneur!"

"I shall forget your fault."

"Monseigneur is too good."

"And perhaps I will even reward you."

"Oh, Monsigneur, what magnanimity!"

"Well, well; set to work."

"I am ready, Monseigneur, — I am ready."

And Buvat began to write in his most rapid style, and without moving his eyes except from the original to the copy, and from the copy to the original, and without pausing except to wipe his forehead, which was covered with perspiration. Dubois profited by his industry to open the closet for La Fillon; and making a sign to her to be silent, he led her toward the door.

"Well, gossip," she whispered, — for in spite of his caution she could not restrain her curiosity, — "where is your writer?"

"There he is," said Dubois, showing Buvat, who, leaning over his paper, was working away industriously.

"What is he doing?"

"Guess."

"How should I know?"

"Then you want me to tell you?"

"Yes."

"Well, he is making my cardinal's hat."

La Fillon uttered such an exclamation of surprise that Buvat started and turned round; but Dubois had already pushed her out of the room, again recommending her to send him daily information of what her captain was doing.

But the reader will ask what Bathilde and D'Harmental were doing all this time. Nothing; they were happy.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A CHAPTER OF SAINT-SIMON.

Four days passed thus, during which Buvat — remaining absent from the office on pretext of indisposition — succeeded in completing the two copies, one for the Prince de Listhnay, the other for Dubois. During these four days — certainly the most agitated of his life — he was so taciturn and gloomy that Bathilde several times asked him what was the matter. But every time that question was put to him, Buvat, mustering all his moral energy, replied that there was absolutely nothing troubling him; and inasmuch as after making that reply he began at once to sing his little song, he succeeded in deceiving Bathilde, — the more easily because he set out every morning as usual, as if he continued going to the library, so that Bathilde saw no material disturbance of his ordinary habits.

As to D'Harmental, he received every morning a visit from the Abbé Brigaud, who told him that everything was going on as well as could be desired; and since, on the other hand, his love-affair was progressing favorably, D'Harmental began to think that the lot of a conspirator was the happiest on earth.

As to the Duc d'Orléans, suspecting nothing, he continued his ordinary life, and had invited the customary guests to his Sunday's supper, when in the afternoon Dubois entered his room.

"Ah, it is you, Abbé!" said the regent; "I was going to send to you to know if you would be with us to-night."

"You are going to have a supper, then, Monseigneur?" asked Dubois.

"Where do you come from with your fast-day face? Is not to-day Sunday?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"Well, then, come back to us. Here is the list of the guests: Nocé, Lafare, Fargy, Ravanne, Broglie. I do not invite Brancas; he has been wearisome for some days. Faith! I think he must be conspiring. Then La Phalaris and D'Averne; they cannot bear each other; they will tear out each other's eyes, and that will amuse us. Then we shall have La Souris, and perhaps Madame de Sabran, if she has no appointment with Richelieu."

"This is your list, Monseigneur?"

"Yes."

"Well, now will your Highness bestow a glance on mine?"

"Have you made one too?"

"No, it was brought to me ready-made."

"What is this?" asked the regent, looking at a paper which Dubois presented to him. "'*List of the officers' names who ask for service in the Spanish army*: Claude-François de Ferrette, Chevalier de Saint Louis, Field-Marshal and Colonel of Cavalry; Boschet, Chevalier de Saint Louis and Colonel of Infantry; De Sabran; De Larochefoucault-Gondral; De Villeneuve; De Lescure; De Laval.' Well, what next?"

"Here is another;" and he presented a second paper to the duke.

"'*Protestation of the nobility.*'"

"Make your lists, Monseigneur; you are not the only one, you see, — the Prince de Cellamare makes his also."

"'*Signed without distinction of ranks, so that there may be no dissatisfaction :* De Vieux-Pont, De la Pailleterie, De Beaufremont, De Latour-du-Pin, De Montauban, Louis de Caumont, Claude de Polignac, Charles de Laval, Antoine de Chastellux, Armand de Richelieu.' Where the devil did you fish up all this, you old fox?"

"Wait, Monseigneur, we have not done yet. Look at this."

"'*Plan of the Conspirators :* Nothing is more important than to make sure of the strong places near the Pyrenees, to gain the garrison of Bayonne.' Surrender our towns! give the keys of France into the hands of the Spanish! What does this mean, Dubois?"

"Patience, Monseigneur; we have better than that to show you : we have here the letters from his Majesty Philip V. himself."

"'*To the King of France*—' But these are only copies."

"I will tell you soon where the originals are."

"Let us see, my dear Abbé, let us see. 'Since Providence has placed me on the throne of Spain,' etc. 'In what light can your faithful subjects regard the treaty which is signed against me?' etc. 'I beg your Majesty to convoke the States-General of the kingdom.' Convoke the States-General! In whose name?"

"In the name of Philip V."

"Philip V. is King of Spain and not of France. Let him keep to his own character. I crossed the Pyrenees once to secure him on his throne; I might cross them a second time to remove him from it."

"We will think of that later, — I do not say no; but for the present, if you please, Monseigneur, we have the fifth piece to read, — and not the least important, as you will see."

And Dubois presented another paper to the regent, which he opened with such impatience that he tore it.

"Never mind," said Dubois, "the pieces are good; put them together and read them."

The regent did so, and read, "Dearly and well beloved."

"Ah!" said he, "it is a question of my deposition. And these letters, I suppose, were to be given to the king?"

"To-morrow, Monseigneur."

"By whom?"

"The marshal."

"Villeroy?"

"Himself."

"How did he determine on such a thing?"

"It was not he; it was his wife, Monseigneur."

"Another of Richelieu's tricks."

"You are right, Monseigneur."

"And from whom do you get these papers?"

"From a poor writer to whom they have been given to be copied, since, thanks to a descent made on Laval's house, a press which he had hidden in the cellar has ceased to work."

"And this writer is in direct communication with Cellamare? The idiots!"

"Not at all, Monseigneur; their measures are better taken. The good man has had to deal only with the Prince de Listhnay."

"Prince de Listhnay! Who is he?"

"Rue du Bac, 110."

"I do not know him."

"Yes, you do, Monseigneur."

"Where have I seen him?"

"In your antechamber."

"What! this pretended Prince de Listhnay —"

"Is no other than that scoundrel D'Avranches, Madame du Maine's *valet-de chambre*."

"Ah! I was astonished that she was not in it, — the little wasp!"

"Oh, she is fully committed to it; and if Monseigneur would like this time to dispose finally of her and her clique, we have them all."

"Let us attend first to what is most pressing."

"Yes, let us think of Villeroy. Are you prepared to act with authority?"

"Entirely. So long as he only strutted and paraded like a man of the theatre or the tilt-yard, very well; so long as he confined himself to calumnies and impertinences against me, still very well; but when it becomes a question of the peace and tranquillity of France,— ah, Monsieur le Maréchal, you have already compromised them sufficiently by your military incapacity, and we will not give you an opportunity of compromising them again by your political follies."

"Then," said Dubois, "we are to lay hands on him?"

"Yes; but with certain precautions. We must take him in the act."

"Nothing easier. He goes every morning at eight o'clock to the king."

"Yes."

"Be to-morrow at half-past seven at Versailles."

"Well?"

"You will be before him with his Majesty."

"And there I will reproach him, in presence of the king —"

"By no means, Monseigneur; it is necessary —"

At that moment the usher opened the door.

"Hush!" said the regent. Then, turning toward the usher, "What is it?" said he.

"Monsieur le Duc de Saint-Simon."

"Ask him if he is on serious business."

The usher turned back and exchanged a few words with the duke; then addressing himself again to the regent, "Most serious, Monseigneur," said he.

"Very well; let him come in."

Saint-Simon entered.

"Pardon, Duke," said the regent, "I have a little matter to arrange with Dubois, and in five minutes will be at your service."

The regent and Dubois withdrew to a corner, where they conversed together in low tones for about five minutes, after which Dubois took his leave.

"There will be no supper this evening," said Dubois to the usher; "give notice to the persons invited. The regent is ill." And he went out.

"Is that true, Monseigneur?" asked Saint-Simon, with genuine concern; for the duke, though very chary of his friendship, had a great regard for the regent.

"No, my dear Duke," said Philippe, "at least not in a way to make me uneasy; but Chirac pretends that if I am not more steady I shall die of apoplexy, and really I have decided to reform."

"Ah, Monseigneur, may God hear you!" said Saint-Simon; "although in fact that comes somewhat late."

"What do you mean, my dear Duke?"

"Yes; your Highness's indulgence has already given only too strong a hold to calumny."

"Ah, if that is all, my dear Duke, calumny has been nibbling at me so long that it must begin to grow weary."

"On the contrary, Monseigneur," replied Saint-Simon, "it must invent something new against you, and it erects its head more sibilant and more venomous than ever."

"Well, let us see; what is going on?"

"For example: a little while ago a beggar stood on the steps of St. Roch, who sang, and asked alms of those

who were coming out from vespers. While he sang, he offered to them what seemed to be ballads. Now, can you imagine what those ballads were, Monseigneur?"

"No; some Christmas song, some diatribe against Law, against that poor Duchesse de Berri, against me, perhaps. Oh, my dear Duke, we must let them sing, if only they pay."

"Hold, Monseigneur; read!" said Saint-Simon. And he presented to the Duc d'Orléans a coarse paper, printed, and resembling the printed songs that are sung in the streets. The prince took it, shrugging his shoulders, and casting his eyes upon it with an inexpressible feeling of disgust, he read as follows: —

"You, whose eloquent speech
Against two tyrants inhuman
Once bravely dared to teach
War to the Greek and the Roman,
Give me your power, that I may pierce
The armor of a beast more fierce.
I burn to go where you lead,
And will even make the attempt,
From all chilling fears exempt,
Charmed by your glorious deed."

"Your Highness recognizes the style?" asked Saint-Simon.

"Yes," replied the regent; "it is Lagrange-Chancel's." Then he continued: —

"He had hardly opened his eyes
When — such as to-day he is shown —
He filled the air with his cries,
Because he was kept from the throne.
To those detestable ideas,
Sprung from the Circes and Medeas,
His mind alone aspires,
Thinking by that infernal art
To bridge the chasm that apart
Keeps him from his desires."

"Here, Duke," said the regent, handing the paper to Saint-Simon; "it is so contemptible that I have n't the heart to go on with it."

"Read, Monseigneur, read! You must learn of what your enemies are capable. When they show themselves in the light, so much the better. Then it is war. They offer you battle. Accept the battle, and prove to them that you are the conqueror of Nerwinden, of Steenkirk, and of Lérida."

"You wish it, then, Duke?"

"It is necessary, Monseigneur."

The regent, with a feeling of repugnance almost insurmountable, returned to the paper, and omitting one stanza, that he might the sooner reach the end, read:—

"Thus the sons, their father weeping,
By the same hand are robbed of life;
The brothers side by side are sleeping;
The husband follows then the wife.
Then — fatal blow, that brings the end! —
Two sons, on whom our hopes depend,
The sweeping scythe of Fate pursues.
The first of these has joined his race;
The other, with a pallid face,
Awaits the call none can refuse."

The regent read these lines with a trembling voice; and when he reached the end, his indignation proved greater than his strength. Crushing the paper in his hands, he began to speak; but his voice failed him, and two great tears rolled from his eyes down his cheeks.

"Monseigneur," said Saint-Simon, looking at the regent with a compassion full of veneration, "I wish the entire world were here to see those generous tears. I should no longer advise you to take vengeance on your enemies, for the entire world would be convinced, as I am, of your innocence."

"Yes, my innocence," murmured the regent; "yes, and the life of Louis XV. will bear witness to it. The scoundrels! They know well who are the real culprits. Ah, Madame de Maintenon! ah, Madame du Maine! ah, Monsieur de Villeroy! For that miserable Lagrange-Chancel is only their scorpion. And to think, Saint-Simon, that at this very moment I have them under my feet; that I have only to throw my weight on my heel, and I shall crush them!"

"Crush, Monseigneur, crush! These are opportunities that are not offered every day; and when they come, it is best to seize them."

The regent reflected a moment, and in that moment his discomposed features regained little by little the expression of good-nature which was natural to them.

"Well," said Saint-Simon, who observed in the regent's countenance the reaction that was taking place, "I see that it will not be for to-day."

"No, Monsieur le Duc," said Philippe; "for to-day I have something better to do than to avenge the injuries of the Duc d'Orléans: I have to save France." And offering his hand to Saint-Simon, the prince returned to his chamber.

That evening, at nine o'clock, the regent left the Palais Royal, and contrary to his custom, went to spend the night at Versailles.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A SNARE.

The next day, about seven o'clock in the morning, at the time when the king rose, an usher entered his Majesty's room and announced that his Royal Highness, Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans, solicited the honor of assisting at his toilet. Louis XV., who was not yet accustomed to decide anything for himself, turned toward Monsieur de Fréjus, who was seated in the least conspicuous corner of the room, as if to ask what he should say; and in reply to this mute question, Monsieur de Fréjus not only made a sign with his head signifying that it was necessary to receive his Royal Highness, but rose immediately and went himself to open the door. The regent stopped a minute on the doorstep to thank Fleury; then having assured himself by a rapid glance round the room that the Maréchal de Villeroy had not yet arrived, he advanced toward the king.

Louis XV. was at this time a pretty child, nine or ten years of age, with long chestnut hair, jet-black eyes, a mouth like a cherry, and a rosy complexion, which, like that of his mother, Marie de Savoie, Duchesse de Bourgogne, was liable to sudden paleness. Although his character was as yet very irresolute, thanks to the contradictory influences of the double government of the Maréchal de Villeroy and Monsieur de Fréjus, he had a certain expression of ardor and resolution which stamped him as he great-grandson of Louis XIV.; and he had a trick of

putting on his hat like him. Warned at first against the Duc d'Orléans as the man in all France from whom he had most to fear, he had felt that prejudice yield little by little during the interviews which they had had together, in which, with that juvenile instinct which so rarely is deceptive, he had recognized a friend.

On his part, it must be said that the Duc d'Orléans had for the king, besides the respect which was his due, a love the most attentive and the most tender. The small amount of business which could be submitted to his young mind he always presented to him with so much clearness and skill that a political task which would have been wearisome with any one else became a recreation when pursued with the regent, so that the royal child always saw his arrival with pleasure. It must be confessed that this work was almost always rewarded by the most beautiful toys which could be found, — toys which Dubois, in order to pay his court to the king, imported from Germany and England. His Majesty therefore received the regent with his sweetest smile, and with a peculiar grace gave him his little hand to kiss, while the Bishop of Fréjus, faithful to his system of humility, had gone back to the corner where he had been surprised by the arrival of the regent.

"I am very glad to see you, Monsieur," said Louis XV. in a sweet little voice and with a childish smile, from which the etiquette imposed upon him could not take away all grace; "and the more glad to see you because, since it is not your usual hour, I presume that you have some good news to tell me."

"Two items, Sire," answered the regent. "The first is that I have just received from Nuremberg a chest which seems to me to contain — "

"Oh, toys! lots of toys! does it not, Monsieur le

Régent?" cried the king, dancing joyously, and clapping his hands, regardless of his *valet-de-chambre*, who was standing behind him, holding the little sword with a cut-steel handle which he was going to hang in the king's belt. "Oh, the dear toys! the beautiful toys! how kind you are! Oh, how I love you, Monsieur le Régent!"

"Sire, I only do my duty," answered the Duc d'Orléans, bowing respectfully, "and you owe me no thanks for that."

"And where is it, Monsieur? Where is this pretty chest?"

"In my apartments, Sire; and if your Majesty wishes it brought here, I will send it during the day, or to-morrow morning."

"Oh, no! now, Monsieur; now, I beg!"

"But it is in my apartments."

"Well, let us go to your apartments," cried the child, running to the door, and forgetting that he still needed, for the completion of his toilet, his sword, his little satin jacket, and his blue ribbon.

"Sire," said Fréjus, advancing, "I would remark that your Majesty abandons yourself too entirely to the pleasure caused by the possession of things that you should already regard as trifles."

"Yes, Monsieur; yes, you are right," said Louis XV., making an effort to control himself. "But you must pardon me; I am not yet ten years old, and I worked hard yesterday."

"That is true," said Monsieur de Fréjus, smiling; "and therefore your Majesty will employ yourself with the toys when you have asked Monsieur le Régent what is the other piece of news which he came to bring you."

"Ah, yes, Monsieur; what is that second item of news?"

"A work which will be profitable to France, and which

is of so much importance that I propose to submit it to your Majesty."

"Have you it here?" asked the young king.

"No, Sire; I did not expect to find your Majesty so well inclined to work, and I left it in my study."

"Well," said Louis XV., turning half toward Monsieur de Fréjus, half toward the regent, and looking at both of them with an imploring eye, "cannot we reconcile all that? Instead of taking my morning walk, I will go to your apartments and see the beautiful Nuremberg toys; and when I have seen them, we will pass into your study and work."

"It is against etiquette, Sire," answered the regent; "but if your Majesty wishes it —"

"Oh, I do wish it! — that is," he added, turning and looking at Fréjus so sweetly that there was no resisting him, "if my good preceptor permits it."

"Does Monsieur de Fréjus see anything wrong in it?" said the regent, turning toward Fleury, and pronouncing these words with an accent which showed that the preceptor would wound him deeply by refusing the request which his royal pupil made him.

"No, Monseigneur," said Fréjus; "quite the contrary. It is well that his Majesty should accustom himself to work; and if the laws of etiquette are violated, that violation will bring about a happy result for the people. I only ask of Monseigneur the permission to accompany his Majesty."

"Certainly, Monsieur," said the regent, "with the greatest pleasure."

"Oh, how good! how kind!" cried Louis XV. "Quick! my sword, my jacket, my blue ribbon! Here I am, Monsieur le Régent;" and he advanced to take the regent's hand. But instead of allowing that familiarity,

the regent bowed, and opening the door, made a sign to the king to precede him, and followed three or four paces behind, hat in hand, together with Fréjus.

The king's apartments, situated on the ground-floor, were on the same level with those of the Duc d'Orléans, and were separated from them only by an antechamber opening into the king's rooms, and a gallery leading thence to the antechamber of the regent. The distance was short, therefore, and — as the king was in haste to arrive — they found themselves in an instant in a large cabinet lighted by four windows, all forming doors, which opened into the garden. This large cabinet led to a smaller one, where the regent generally worked, and to which he brought his most intimate friends and his favorites. All his Highness's court was in attendance, — a very natural circumstance, since it was the hour for rising. The young king therefore did not notice either Monsieur d'Artagnan, captain of the Gray Musketeers, or the Marquis de Lafare, captain of the Guards, or a very considerable number of the Light-Horse, who were drawn up outside the windows; but on a table in the middle of the room he saw the welcome chest, the great size of which caused him, in spite of the somewhat chilling exhortation of Monsieur de Fréjus, to give a cry of joy.

However, he was obliged to contain himself, and receive as king the homage of Monsieur d'Artagnan and Monsieur de Lafare. Meanwhile the regent had called two *valets-de-chambre*, who quickly opened the lid and displayed the most splendid collection of toys which had ever dazzled the eyes of a king nine years old. At this tempting sight the king forgot alike preceptor, etiquette, captain of the Guards, and captain of the Gray Musketeers. He hastened toward this paradise which was opened to him, and if from an inexhaustible mine, from a fairy casket, from

a treasury of the "Arabian Nights," he drew out successively clocks, three-deckers, squadrons of cavalry, battalions of infantry, pedlers with their packs, jugglers with their cups, — in short, all those wonders which, on Christmas Eve, turn the heads of children beyond the Rhine, — and with such undisguised transports of joy that Monsieur de Fréjus himself respected his royal pupil's happiness. The spectators watched him with that religious silence which attends great griefs or great joys. The silence was interrupted by a violent noise in the antechamber.

The door was opened. An usher announced the Duc de Villeroy, and the marshal appeared, loudly demanding to see the king. As they were, however, accustomed to such proceedings, the regent merely pointed to his Majesty, who was still continuing to empty the chest, covering the furniture and floor with the splendid toys which he drew from the inexhaustible receptacle.

The marshal had no ground for complaint; he was nearly an hour late, and the king was with Monsieur Fréjus, his colleague; but none the less he grumbled as he approached the king, and threw around glances which seemed to say that if his Majesty was in any danger he was there to defend him.

The regent exchanged a significant glance with Lafare, and an almost imperceptible smile with D'Artagnan; the affair was progressing favorably.

The chest was emptied; and after having allowed the king to enjoy for an instant the sight of all his treasures, the regent approached him, and, still hat in hand, recalled to his mind the promise he had made to devote an hour to the consideration of State affairs.

Louis XV., with that scrupulousness which afterward led him to declare that punctuality was the politeness of kings, threw a last glance over his toys, asked permission

to have them removed to his apartments, and advanced toward the little cabinet, the door of which was opened by the regent. Then, acting in accordance with their respective characters, Monsieur de Fleury, under pretext of his dislike of politics, drew back and sat down in a corner, while the marshal darted forward, and seeing the king enter the cabinet, tried to follow him. This was the moment that the regent had impatiently expected.

"Pardon, Monsieur le Maréchal," said he, barring the passage; "but I wish to speak to his Majesty on affairs which demand the most absolute secrecy, and I beg, therefore, that you will allow me to remain a moment with him in private."

"In private!" cried Villeroy; "in private! You know, Monseigneur, that it is impossible."

"Impossible, Monsieur le Maréchal!" replied the regent, with the greatest coolness; "impossible! and why, if you please?"

"Because, as governor to his Majesty, I have the right to accompany him everywhere."

"In the first place, Monsieur," replied the regent, "this right does not appear to me to rest on any very positive foundation; and if I have till now tolerated, not this right, but this pretension, it is because the age of the king has hitherto rendered it unimportant. But now that his Majesty approaches his tenth year, and that I am permitted to begin instructing him in the science of government, in which I am his appointed preceptor, you will see that it is quite right that I, as well as Monsieur de Fréjus and yourself, should be allowed some hours of private intercourse with his Majesty. This will be less painful to you to grant, Marshal," added the regent, with a smile, the expression of which it was impossible to mistake, "because, having studied these matters so much yourself,

it is impossible that you can have anything left to learn."

"But, Monsieur," said the marshal, as usual forgetting his politeness as he became warm, "I beg to remind you that the king is my pupil."

"I know it, Monsieur," said the regent, in the same tone of raillery which he had assumed at the beginning of the conversation. "Make of his Majesty a great captain; I do not wish to prevent you. Your campaigns in Italy and Flanders prove that he could not have a better master; but at this moment, Monsieur le Maréchal, there is no question of military science. It is a matter involving a State secret, which can be confided to his Majesty only; therefore you will not be displeased if I renewedly express my desire to speak with the king in private."

"Impossible, Monseigneur, impossible!" cried the marshal, forgetting himself more and more.

"Impossible!" replied the regent; "and why?"

"Why?" continued the marshal; "because my duty is not to lose sight of the king for a moment, and because I will not permit —"

"Take care, Monsieur le Maréchal," interrupted the Duc d'Orléans, haughtily; "I think you are about to forget your proper respect toward me."

"Monseigneur," continued the marshal, becoming more and more angry, "I know the respect which I owe to your Royal Highness, and I also know what I owe to my charge, and to the king; and for that reason I will not lose sight of his Majesty for an instant, inasmuch as —"

The duke hesitated.

"Well, finish, Monsieur," said the regent.

"Inasmuch as I answer for his person," said the marshal, who, urged on by that challenge, did not wish to have the appearance of backing out.

At this abandonment of all restraint there was a moment's silence, during which nothing was heard but the mutterings of the marshal, and the stifled sighs of Monsieur de Fleury.

As to the Duc d'Orléans, he raised his head with a smile of sovereign contempt, and assuming that air of dignity which made him, when he chose, one of the most imposing princes in the world, "Monsieur de Villeroy," said he, "you mistake me strangely, it appears, and imagine that you are speaking to some one else. But since you forget who I am, I must endeavor to remind you. Marquis de Lafare," continued he, addressing his captain of the Guards, "do your duty."

Then the Maréchal de Villeroy, seeing on what a precipice he stood, opened his mouth to attempt an excuse, but the regent left him no time to finish his sentence, and shut the door in his face.

The Marquis de Lafare instantly approached the marshal, and demanded his sword. The marshal remained for an instant as if thunderstruck. He had for so long a time been left undisturbed in his impertinence that he had begun to think himself invincible. He tried to speak, but his voice failed him; and on the second and still more imperative demand, he gave up his sword. At the same moment a door opens, and a chair appears. Two musketeers push the marshal into it; it is closed. D'Artagnan and Lafare place themselves at each side, and in the twinkling of an eye the prisoner is carried out through a window opening on the gardens. The Light-Horse follow; and at a considerable and increasing speed they descend the staircase, turn to the left and enter the orangery. There the suite remain; and the chair, its porters, and tenant, enter a second room, accompanied only by Lafare and D'Artagnan.

All this had taken place so quickly that the marshal, not distinguished for steadiness of nerve, had not had time to recover himself. He had found himself disarmed; he had been carried away; he was shut up with two men who, as he was aware, professed no great friendship for him, and always exaggerating his importance, he concluded that he was lost.

"Gentlemen," he cried, turning pale, while perspiration and powder ran down his face, "I hope I am not going to be assassinated!"

"No, Monsieur le Maréchal, don't be alarmed," said Lafare, while D'Artagnan could not help laughing at his ridiculous figure; "something much more simple, and infinitely less tragic."

"What is it, then?" asked the marshal, to whom this assurance restored some tranquillity.

"There are two letters, Monsieur, which you were to have given to the king this morning, and which you must have in one of your pockets."

The marshal, who till that moment, in his anxiety about himself, had forgotten Madame du Maine's affairs, started, and raised his hand to the pocket where the letters were.

"Pardon, Monsieur le Duc," said D'Artagnan, stopping his hand, "but we are authorized to inform you, in case you should feel inclined to remove these letters, that the regent has copies of them."

"I may add," said Lafare, "that we are authorized to take them by force, and are absolved in advance from all accidents that may happen in any struggle that may ensue, supposing, which is not probable, that you should wish, Monsieur le Maréchal, to push rebellion so far as that."

"And you assure me," said the marshal, "that the regent has copies of these letters?"

"On my word of honor," said D'Artagnan.

"In that case," replied Villeroy, "I do not see why I should prevent you from taking these letters, which do not concern me in the least, and which I undertook to deliver to oblige others."

"We are aware of that, Monsieur le Maréchal," said Lafare.

"But," added the marshal, "I hope you will inform his Royal Highness of the readiness with which I submitted to his orders, and of my regret for having offended him?"

"Do not doubt it, Monsieur le Maréchal; all will be reported as it has taken place. But these letters?"

"Here they are, Monsieur," said the marshal, giving two letters to Lafare.

Lafare assured himself by the seals that they were really the letters he was in search of. "My dear D'Artagnan," said he, "now conduct the marshal to his destination, and give orders, in the name of the regent, that he is to be treated with every respect."

The chair was closed, and the porters carried it off. At the gate of the gardens a carriage with six horses was waiting, in which they placed the marshal, who now began to suspect the trap which had been laid for him. D'Artagnan seated himself by him, an officer of musketeers and Du Libois, one of the king's gentlemen, opposite; and attended by twenty musketeers, — four at each side, and twelve following, — the carriage set off at a gallop.

Meanwhile the Marquis de Lafare returned to the château with the two letters of Philip V. in his hand.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

THE same day, toward two o'clock in the afternoon, while D'Harmental, profiting by Buvat's absence, who was supposed to be at the library, was repeating to Bathilde for the thousandth time that he loved her, Nanette entered, and announced that some one was waiting in his own room on important business. D'Harmental, anxious to know who could be this importunate visitor, pursuing him even to the paradise of his love, went to the window and saw the Abbé Brigaud walking up and down in his room. D'Harmental instantly took leave of Bathilde, and went up to his own apartments.

"Well," said the abbé, "while you are quietly making love to your neighbor, fine things are happening."

"What things?" asked D'Harmental.

"Do you not know?"

"I know absolutely nothing, except that — unless what you have to tell me is of the greatest importance — I should like to strangle you for having disturbed me; so take care, and if you have no news worthy of the occasion, invent some."

"Unfortunately," replied the abbé, "the reality leaves little to the imagination."

"Indeed, my dear Brigaud," said D'Harmental, regarding the abbé more closely, "you seem to be in a terrible fright. What has happened? Tell me."

"What has happened? Oh, nothing worth mentioning, — only that we have been sold out by some one;

that the Maréchal de Villeroy was arrested this morning at Versailles, and that the two letters from Philip V., which he was to give to the king, are in the hands of the regent."

D'Harmental perfectly understood the gravity of the situation, but his face exhibited the calmness which was habitual to him in moments of danger.

"Is that all?" he asked quietly.

"All for the present; and if you do not think it enough, you are difficult to satisfy."

"My dear Abbé," said D'Harmental, "when we entered on this conspiracy it was with almost equal chances of success and failure. Yesterday our chances were ninety to a hundred; to-day they are only thirty, — that is all."

"I am glad to see that you do not easily allow yourself to be discouraged," said Brigaud.

"My dear Abbé," said D'Harmental, "at this moment I am a happy man, and I see everything on the bright side. If you had taken me in a moment of sadness, it would have been quite the reverse, and I should have replied 'Amen' to your 'De Profundis.'"

"And your opinion?"

"Is that the game is becoming perplexed, but is not yet lost. The Maréchal de Villeroy is not of the conspiracy, does not even know the names of the conspirators. Philip V.'s letters — as far as I remember them — do not name anybody; and the only person really compromised is the Prince de Cellamare. The inviolability of his office protects him from any real danger. Besides, if our plan has reached the Cardinal Alberoni, Monsieur de Saint-Aignan must serve as hostage."

"There is truth in what you say."

"And from whom have you this news?" asked the chevalier.

"From Valef, who had it from Madame du Maine, who, on receipt of the news, went to the Prince de Cellamare himself."

"We must see Valef."

"I have appointed him to meet me here, and on my way I stopped at the Marquis de Pompadour's. I am astonished that he is not here before me."

"Raoul!" said a voice on the staircase.

"Stay, it is he!" cried D'Harmental, running to the door and opening it.

"Thank you," said Valef, "for your assistance, which is very seasonable, for I was just going away, convinced that Brigaud must have made a mistake, and that no Christian could live at such a height, and in such a pigeon-hole. I must certainly bring Madame du Maine here, that she may know what she owes you."

"God grant," said the Abbé Brigaud, "that we may not all be worse lodged a few days hence!"

"Ah, you mean the Bastille! It is possible, Abbé; but at least one does not go to the Bastille of one's own accord. Moreover, it is a royal lodging, which raises it a little, and makes it a place where a gentleman may live without degradation; but a place like this — fie, Abbé!"

"If you knew what I have found here," said D'Harmental, a little piqued, "you would be as unwilling to leave it as I am."

"Ah, some little bourgeoise, — some Madame Michelin, perhaps. Take care, D'Harmental; these things are allowed only to Richelieu. With you and me, who are perhaps worth as much as he is, but are unfortunately not quite so much in fashion, it will not do."

"Well," said the Abbé Brigaud, "although your conversation is somewhat frivolous, I hear it with pleasure,

since it assures me that our affairs are not in so bad a plight as I thought."

"On the contrary, the conspiracy is gone to the devil."

"What are you saying, Baron?" cried Brigaud.

"I scarcely thought they would leave me time to bring you the news."

"Were you nearly arrested then, my dear Valef?" asked D'Harmental.

"I escaped only by a hair's breadth."

"How did it happen, Baron?"

"You remember, Abbé, that I left you to go to the Prince de Cellamare?"

"Yes."

"Well, I was there when they came to seize his papers."

"Have they seized the prince's papers?" cried Brigaud.

"All except what we burned, which unfortunately were the smaller number."

"Then we are all lost," said the abbé.

"Why, my dear Abbé, how you throw the helve after the hatchet!"

"But, Valef, you have not told us how it happened," said D'Harmental.

"My dear Chevalier, imagine the most ridiculous thing in the world. I wish you had been there; we should have laughed to kill ourselves. It would have enraged that fellow Dubois."

"What! was Dubois himself at the ambassador's?"

"In person, Abbé. Imagine the Prince de Cellamare and myself quietly sitting by the corner of the fire, taking out letters from a little casket, and burning those which seemed to deserve the honors of an *auto-da-fé*, when all at once his *valet-de-chambre* enters, and announces that the hotel of the embassy is invested by a body of musketeers, and that Dubois and Leblanc wish to speak to him. The

object of this visit is not difficult to guess. The prince — without taking the trouble to choose — empties the casket into the fire, pushes me into a dressing-closet, and orders that they shall be admitted. The order was useless; Dubois and Leblanc were at the door. Fortunately, neither one nor the other had seen me."

"Well, I see nothing droll as yet," said Brigaud.

"This is just where it begins," replied Valef. "Remember that I was in the closet, seeing and hearing everything. Dubois entered, stretching out his weasel's head to watch the Prince de Cellamare, who, wrapped in his dressing-gown, stood before the fire to give the papers time to burn.

"'Monsieur,' said the prince, in that phlegmatic manner you know he has, 'may I know to what event I owe the honor of this visit?'

"'Oh, *mon Dieu*, Monseigneur!' said Dubois, 'to a very simple thing, — a desire which Monsieur Leblanc and I had to learn a little of your papers, of which,' he added, showing the letters of Philip V., 'these two samples have given us a foretaste.'"

"What!" said Brigaud, "these letters, seized at ten o'clock at Versailles, are in Dubois's hands at one o'clock?"

"As you say, Abbé. You see that they travelled faster than if they had been put in the post."

"And what did the ambassador say then?" inquired D'Harmental.

"Oh, the prince wished to carry it off with a high hand, by appealing to his rights as an envoy; but Dubois, who is something of a logician, showed him that he had himself somewhat violated these rights, by covering the conspiracy with his ambassador's cloak. In short, as the prince was the weakest, he was obliged to submit to what he could not prevent. Besides, Leblanc, without asking permission,

had already opened the desk and examined its contents, while Dubois drew out the drawers of a bureau, and rummaged in them. All at once Cellamare left his place; and stopping Leblanc, who had just taken a packet of papers tied with red ribbon, he said, —

"'Pardon, Monsieur; to each one his prerogatives. These are ladies' letters.'

"'Thanks for your confidence,' said Dubois, not in the least disconcerted, but rising and taking the papers from the hand of Leblanc, 'I am accustomed to secrets of this kind, and yours shall be well kept.'

"At this moment, looking toward the fire, he saw — in the midst of the burnt letters — a paper still untouched; and darting toward it, he seized it just as the flames were reaching it. The movement was so rapid that the ambassador could not prevent it, and the paper was in Dubois's hands.

"'*Peste!*' said the prince, seeing Dubois shaking his fingers, 'I knew that the regent had skilful spies, but I did not know that they were brave enough to go into the fire.'

"'Well, Prince,' said Dubois, unfolding the paper, 'they are well rewarded for their bravery. See.'

"The prince cast his eyes over the paper; I don't know what it contained, but I know that the prince turned pale as death; and that as Dubois burst out laughing, Cellamare, in a moment of wrath, broke into a thousand pieces a little marble statue which was near his hand.

"'I am glad it was not I,' said Dubois, coldly, looking at the pieces which rolled at his feet, and putting the paper in his pocket.

"'Every one in turn, Monsieur; Heaven is just!' said the ambassador.

"'Meanwhile,' said Dubois, 'as we have got what we

wanted, and have no time to lose to-day, we will set about affixing the seals.'

"'The seals here!' cried the ambassador, exasperated.

"'With your permission,' replied Dubois. 'Proceed, Monsieur Leblanc.'

"Leblanc drew out from a bag bands and wax, all prepared. They began operations with the desk and the bureau, then they advanced toward the door of my closet.

"'No,' cried the prince, 'I will not permit —'

"'Gentlemen,' said Dubois, opening the door, and introducing into the room two officers of musketeers, 'the ambassador of Spain is accused of high treason against the State. Have the kindness to accompany him to the carriage which is waiting, and take him — you know where; if he resists, call eight men, and take him by force.'"

"Well, and what did the prince do then?" asked Brigaud.

"What you would have done in his place, I presume, my dear Abbé. He followed the two officers, and five minutes afterward your humble servant found himself under seal."

"Poor Baron!" cried D'Harmental; "and how the devil did you get out?"

"That is the beauty of it. Hardly had the prince gone, leaving me under seal, when Dubois called the *valet-de-chambre.*

"'What is your name?' asked Dubois.

"'Lapierre, at your service, Monseigneur.'

"'My dear Leblanc,' said Dubois, 'explain, if you please, to Monsieur Lapierre, what are the penalties for breaking seals.'

"'The galleys,' replied Leblanc, in that pleasant tone that you know belongs to him.

"'My dear Monsieur Lapierre,' continued Dubois, in

a voice as sweet as honey, 'you hear. If you would like to spend a few days rowing on one of his Majesty's vessels, touch one of these seals, and your object is gained. If, on the contrary, a hundred louis are agreeable to you, guard faithfully the seals that we have placed, and in three days the money shall be given you.'

"'I prefer the hundred louis,' said the scoundrel.

"'Well, then, sign this paper. We constitute you guardian of the prince's cabinet.'

"'I am at your orders, Monseigneur,' replied Lapierre; and he signed.

"'Now,' said Dubois, 'you understand all the responsibility you have undertaken?'

"'Yes, Monseigneur.'

"'And submit to it?'

"'I do.'

"'Now, Leblanc,' said Dubois, 'we have nothing further to do here, and,' he added, showing the paper which he had snatched from the fire, 'I have all I wanted.'

"And having said these words, he left, followed by Leblanc.

"Lapierre, as soon as he had seen them off, ran to the cabinet, and exclaimed, 'Quick, Monsieur le Baron! you must take advantage of our solitude and leave.'

"'You knew, then, that I was here, you rascal?'

"'Of course! I should n't have accepted the office of guardian if I had n't known you were here. I saw you go in, and I thought you would not like to stay there for three days.'

"'And you were right; a hundred louis for your good idea.'

"'*Mon Dieu!* what are you doing?' cried Lapierre.

"'I am trying to get out.'

"'Oh, not by the door! You would not send a poor

fellow to the galleys; besides, they have taken the key with them.'

"'And where am I to get out, then?'

"'Raise your head.'

"'It is raised.'

"'Look in the air.'

"'I am looking.'

"'To your right. Do you not see anything?'

"'Yes, a little window.'

"'Well, get on a chair, on a table, on anything you find; the window opens into the alcove. There, let yourself slip now; you will fall on the bed, — that is it. You have not hurt yourself, Monsieur?'

"'No. The prince had a very nice bed here, upon my word. I hope he will have one as comfortable where they are taking him.'

"'And I hope meanwhile that Monsieur le Baron will not forget the service I have rendered him.'

"'Oh, the hundred louis? Well, as I do not want to part with money at this moment, take this ring; it is worth three hundred pistoles, — you gain six hundred francs on the bargain.'

"'Monsieur le Baron is the most generous gentleman I know.'

"'Now, tell me how I can get away.'

"'By this little staircase; you will find yourself in the pantry. You must then go through the kitchen into the garden, and go out by the little door.'

"'Thanks for the itinerary.'

"I followed the instructions of Monsieur Lapierre exactly, and here I am."

"And the prince, where is he?" asked the chevalier.

"How do I know? In prison probably."

"*Diable! diable! diable!*" said Brigaud.

"Well, what do you say to my Odyssey, Abbé?"

"I say that it would be very droll, but for that cursed paper which Dubois picked out of the cinders."

"Yes," said Valef, "that spoils it."

"And you have not any idea what it could be?"

"Not the least; but never mind, it is not lost, — we shall know some day what it was."

At this moment they heard some one coming up the staircase. The door opened, and Boniface appeared.

"Pardon, Monsieur Raoul," said he; "but it is not you I seek, it is Papa Brigaud."

"Never mind, my dear Boniface, you are welcome. My dear Baron, allow me to present to you my predecessor in this chamber, — the son of my worthy landlady, Madame Denis, and godson of our good friend the Abbé Brigaud."

"Oh, you have barons for friends, Monsieur Raoul! What an honor for our house!"

"Well," said the abbé, "you were looking for me, you said. What do you want?"

"I want nothing. It was my mother who sent for you."

"What does she want? Do you know?"

"Of course I know. She wants to ask you why the parliament is to assemble to-morrow."

"The parliament assembles to-morrow!" cried Valef and D'Harmental.

"And for what purpose?" asked Brigaud.

"Ah, that is just what bothers her, that poor woman."

"And where did your mother hear that the parliament is to assemble?"

"I told her."

"And where did you hear of it?"

"At the office. Maître Joullu was with the president when the order arrived."

"Well, tell your mother I will come to her directly."

"Sufficit; she will expect you. Adieu, Monsieur Raoul; adieu, Monsieur le Baron." And Monsieur Boniface went out, far from suspecting the effect he had produced on his listeners.

"It is some *coup-d'état* which is preparing," murmured D'Harmental.

"I will go to Madame du Maine to warn her," said Valef.

"And I to Pompadour for news," said Brigaud.

"And I," said D'Harmental, "remain here. If I am wanted, Abbé, you know where I am."

"But if you should not be at home, Chevalier?"

"Oh, I shall not be far off. Open the window, clap your hands, and I will come."

Valef and Brigaud went away together, and D'Harmental went back to Bathilde, whom he found very uneasy. It was five o'clock in the afternoon, and Buvat was still absent; it was the first time such a thing had happened within the young girl's remembrance.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE BED OF JUSTICE.

The following day, about seven o'clock in the morning, Brigaud came for D'Harmental, and found the young man ready and waiting. They wrapped themselves in their cloaks, drew down their hats over their eyes, and proceeded through the Rue de Cléry, the Place des Victoires, and the garden of the Palais Royal.

On reaching the Rue de l'Échelle, they began to perceive an unusual stir. All the avenues leading toward the Tuileries were guarded by detachments of musketeers and light-horse, and the people, expelled from the court and gardens of the Tuileries, crowded into the Place du Carrousel. D'Harmental and Brigaud mixed with the mob.

Having arrived at the place where the triumphal arch now stands, they were accosted by an officer of the Gray Musketeers, wrapped in a large cloak like themselves. It was Valef.

"Well, Baron," asked Brigaud, "what news?"

"Ah, it is you, Abbé," said Valef. "We have been looking for you, — Laval, Malezieux, and myself. I have just left them; they must be somewhere near. Let us stop here; it will not be long before they find us. Do you know anything yourself?"

"No, nothing. I called at Malezieux's, but he had already gone out."

"Say that he had not yet come home. We remained at the Arsenal all night."

"And no hostile demonstration has been made?" asked D'Harmental.

"None. Monsieur le Duc du Maine and Monsieur le Comte de Toulouse were summoned for the regent's council, which is to be held this morning before the beginning of the bed of justice. At half-past six they were both at the Tuileries; so Madame du Maine, in order to get the news as soon as possible, has come and installed herself in her superintendent's apartments."

"Is it known what has become of the Prince de Cellamare?" asked D'Harmental.

"He is sent to Orléans, in a carriage with four horses, in the company of a gentleman of the king's household, and an escort of a dozen light-horse."

"And is nothing known about the paper which Dubois picked out of the cinders?" asked Brigaud.

"Nothing."

"What does Madame du Maine think?"

"That he is brewing something against the legitimated princes, and that he will profit by this to take away some more of their privileges. This morning she lectured her husband sharply, and he promised to remain firm, but she does not rely upon him."

"And Monsieur de Toulouse?"

"We saw him yesterday evening; but, you know, my dear Abbé, there is nothing to be made of him, with his modesty, or rather his humility. He always thinks that they have done too much for him, and is ready to abandon to the regent anything that is asked of him."

"By the bye, the king?"

"Well, the king —"

"Yes; how has he taken the arrest of his tutor?"

"Ah, do you not know? It seems that there was a compact between the marshal and Monsieur de Fréjus

that if one of them should be removed from his Majesty, the other should leave immediately. Yesterday morning Monsieur de Fréjus disappeared."

"And where is he?"

"God knows! The king, who had taken the loss of his marshal very well, is inconsolable at that of his bishop."

"And how do you know all that?"

"Through the Duc de Richelieu, who went yesterday, about two o'clock, to Versailles, to pay his respects to the king, and found his Majesty in despair in the midst of the china and ornaments which he had broken. Unfortunately Richelieu, instead of encouraging the king's grief, made him laugh by telling him a hundred stories, and almost consoled him by helping him to break the rest of the china and ornaments."

At this moment an individual clothed in the long robe of an advocate, and with a square cap, passed near the group which was formed by Brigaud, D'Harmental, and Valef, humming the refrain of a song made on the marshal after the battle of Ramillies. Brigaud turned round, and under the disguise thought he recognized Pompadour. The advocate stopped, and approached the group in question. The abbé had no longer any doubt; it was really the marquis.

"Well, Maître Clément," said he, "what news from the palace?"

"Oh!" answered Pompadour, "good news, particularly if it be true: they say that the parliament refuses to come to the Tuileries."

"*Vive Dieu!*" cried Valef, "that will reconcile me with the red robes. But they will not dare."

"Why not? You know that Monsieur de Mesme is for us; he has been named president through the influence of Monsieur du Maine."

"Yes, that is true, but that is long since," said Brigaud; "and if you have nothing better to rely upon, Maître Clément, I should advise you not to count upon him."

"Particularly," answered Valef, "as he has just obtained from the regent the payment of five hundred thousand francs on his claim for arrears."

"Oh, oh!" said D'Harmental; "see! it appears to me that something new is going on. Are they coming out already from the regent's council?"

Indeed, a great movement was taking place in the court of the Tuileries; and the two carriages of the Duc du Maine and the Comte de Toulouse left their post, and approached the clock pavilion. At the same instant the two brothers made their appearance. They exchanged a few words; each got into his own carriage; and the two vehicles departed at a rapid pace by the waterside wicket.

For ten minutes Brigaud, D'Harmental, Pompadour, and Valef were lost in conjectures regarding this event, — which, having been remarked by others as well as by them, had made a sensation among the crowd, — but without being able to assign it to its proper cause. Then they noticed Malezieux, who appeared to be looking for them. They went to him, and by his discomposed face they judged that the information which he had to bring was not comforting.

"Well," asked Pompadour, "have you any idea of what has been going on?"

"Alas!" answered Malezieux, "I am afraid that all is lost."

"You know that the Duc du Maine and the Comte de Toulouse have left the council?" asked Valef.

"I was on the quay when he passed in his carriage, and

he recognized me, and stopped the carriage, and sent me by his servant this little note in pencil."

"Let us see," said Brigaud, and he read: —

I do not know what is plotting against us, but the regent invited us — Toulouse and me — to leave the council. That invitation appeared to me an order, and as all resistance would have been useless, seeing that we have in the council only four or five voices, upon which I am not sure that we can count, I was obliged to obey. Try to see the duchess, who must be at the Tuileries, and tell her that I am retiring to Rambouillet, where I shall wait for the turn of events.

Your affectionate,

LOUIS-AUGUSTE.

"The coward!" said Valef.

"And these are the men for whom we risk our heads," murmured Pompadour.

"You are mistaken, my dear Marquis," said Brigaud; "we risk our heads on our own account, I hope, and not for others. Is not that true, Chevalier? Well, what in the devil is the matter with you?"

"Wait, Abbé," answered D'Harmental; "I seem to recognize — yes, the devil take me, it is he! You will not go away from this place, gentlemen?"

"No; I answer for myself at least," said Pompadour.

"Nor I," said Valef.

"Nor I," said Malezieux.

"Nor I," said the abbé.

"Well, then, I will rejoin you in an instant."

"Where are you going?" asked Brigaud.

"Do not look, Abbé," said D'Harmental; "it is on private business."

Dropping Valef's arm, D'Harmental began to press through the crowd toward a person whom he had been following with his eyes for some time, and who, thanks

to his personal strength, had approached the gate with a half-intoxicated damsel hanging on either arm.

"Do you see, my princesses?" said the person in question, tracing architectural lines in the sand with the end of his cane, while at every movement his long sword fretted his neighbors' legs, — "here is what is called a bed of justice. I know all about that. I saw what took place at the death of the late king, when the will was broken, and it was declared, with all due respect for his Majesty Louis XIV., that bastards were always bastards. You see, it takes place in a large hall, long or square, it makes no difference which. The seat of the king is here; the peers are there; the parliament is in front."

"Say, Honorine," interrupted one of the two young women, "does this story that he is telling amuse you?"

"Not the least in the world. It was not worth while to bring us here from the Quai St. Paul, promising us a spectacle, just to show us fifty mounted musketeers and a dozen light-horse running after one another."

"Say, then, old man," continued the first speaker, "it seems to me that if we should go and eat a *matelotte à la Rapée*, it would be more nourishing than your bed of justice; hey?"

"Mademoiselle Honorine," replied he to whom this artful invitation was addressed, "I have already observed, though it is hardly twelve hours since I had the honor of making your acquaintance, that you are very ready with your tongue, — a bad fault in a woman. Try, then, to correct it, at any rate during the rest of the time you are to be with me."

"I say, Phémie, does he mean to lead us about like this till five o'clock in the evening, and give us nothing but his fried omelet and his three bottles of white wine, — the old fox? To begin with, I warn you,

my fine fellow, that I am off, if I am not fed right away."

"Very fine, my passion, — as Monsieur Pierre Corneille says, — very fine!" replied the personage to whose vanity this gastronomic appeal was addressed, seizing with each of his hands a wrist of each of the young women, and securing them under his arms as if with pincers; "there is no question here of a dish more or less. You belong to me till four o'clock, according to the arrangement made with Madame Something — what is her name?"

"Yes, but fed, fed!"

"The matter of food did n't enter for an instant into the arrangement, my chickens; and if any one has been wronged in the affair, it is I."

"You? Stingy fellow!"

"Yes, I; I asked for two women."

"Well, you have them."

"Pardon, pardon! I repeat: I asked for two women; that is to say, a blonde and a brunette. But taking advantage of the obscurity, they gave me two blondes, which is exactly as if they had given me only one, since the two are just alike. It is I, then, who have the right to complain. So let us say no more about it, my loves."

"But it is an injustice!" exclaimed the two women.

"Well, the world is full of injustice. For instance, they are probably doing an injustice at this very moment to that poor Monsieur du Maine; and if you had any feeling, you would think only of the trouble they are preparing for that poor prince. As for myself, my stomach is so full that it would be impossible for me to swallow the least thing. Besides, you wanted to see the show. Well, here it is, and a fine one; look! Who looks, dines."

"Captain," said the chevalier, tapping Roquefinette on the shoulder, and hoping that, thanks to the move-

ment occasioned by the approach of the parliament, they would be able to talk without being observed, "can I say two words to you in private?"

"Four, Chevalier, four; and with the greatest pleasure. Stay there, my kittens," he added, placing the two young women in the front row; "and if any one insults you, make me a sign. I shall be only two steps from here. I am ready, Chevalier," he continued, drawing D'Harmental out of the crowd; "I have recognized you for the last five minutes, but it was not my business to speak first."

"And I see with pleasure," said D'Harmental, "that Captain Roquefinette is still prudent."

"Prudentissimo, Chevalier; so if you have any new overture to make, out with it."

"No, Captain, no; not at present, at least. Besides, the place is not suitable for a conference of that nature. Only I wish to know, in case of my having need of you, whether you still live in the same place?"

"Still, Chevalier; I am like an ivy, — I die where I grow. Only, like that, I climb; which means that instead of finding me, as you did the first time, on the first or second floor, you will have to look for me on the fifth or sixth, seeing that, by a very natural see-saw movement, as my funds go down, I go up."

"What, Captain," said D'Harmental, laughing, and putting his hand in his pocket, "you are in want of money, and you do not address yourself to your friends?"

"I borrow money!" cried the captain, stopping D'Harmental's liberal intentions with a sign; "no. When I do you a service, you make me a present; well and good. When I conclude a bargain, you execute the conditions. But I to ask without having a right to ask, — that may do for a church rat, but not for a soldier. One may be only a simple gentleman, and yet as proud as a duke and

peer. But, pardon, pardon; I see that my wenches are crawling off, and I don't care to be cheated even by creatures of that sort. If you want me, you know where to find me. *Au revoir*, Chevalier! *au revoir!*"

And without waiting for D'Harmental's answer, Roquefinette started in pursuit of Mademoiselles Honorine and Euphémie, who, thinking they were out of the captain's sight, were trying to take advantage of that circumstance to seek elsewhere the *matelotte* to which the honorable trooper doubtless would have been as much inclined as they were, if perchance his pocket had been better furnished.

Meantime, since it was only eleven o'clock in the morning, and in all probability the bed of justice would continue till four in the afternoon, and until then nothing would be decided, the chevalier thought that instead of remaining on the Place du Carrousel, he would do better to turn the three or four hours which he had before him to the profit of his love. Moreover, the nearer he approached to the catastrophe, the more need he felt of seeing Bathilde. Bathilde had become one of the elements of his life, one of the organs necessary to his existence; and at the moment when he might be separated from her forever, he did not understand how he could live a single day away from her. Consequently, pressed by the eternal craving for the presence of the loved object, the chevalier, instead of going to look for his companions, went toward the Rue du Temps-Perdu.

D'Harmental found the poor child very uneasy. Buvat had not come home since half-past nine the morning before. Nanette had been to inquire at the library, and to her great astonishment, and the scandal of his fellow-clerks, she had learned that he had not been there for five or six days. Such a derangement in Buvat's habits

indicated the imminence of serious events. On the other hand, the young girl had noticed in Raoul the day before a sort of nervous agitation, which, though kept under control, seemed to indicate the approach of an important crisis. Thus, joining her old fears to her new anxieties, Bathilde felt instinctively that a misfortune, invisible but inevitable, hung above her, and at any moment might fall upon her head.

But when Bathilde saw Raoul, all fear arising from the past or looking toward the future, was lost in the happiness of the present. On his part, Raoul, either by exercise of self-control, or by force of a sentiment like her own, thought of nothing but Bathilde. Nevertheless, this time the preoccupations on both sides were so powerful that Bathilde could not help declaring to Raoul her anxieties, which he combated the more feebly because that absence of Buvat linked itself in his mind with certain suspicions that had already occurred to him, and which he had hastened to dismiss. Time slipped by with its usual rapidity, and four o'clock struck when the lovers fancied that they had been together but a few minutes. It was the hour at which Raoul generally took his leave.

If Buvat was to return, he would probably return at this time. After exchanging a hundred vows, the two young people separated, agreeing that if anything new happened to either of them, whatever hour of the day or night it might be, the other should be notified immediately.

At the door of Madame Denis's house D'Harmental met Brigaud. The bed of justice was concluded, and nothing positive was yet known; but vague rumors were afloat that terrible measures had been taken. Authentic information must soon arrive, and Brigaud had appointed a rendezvous with Pompadour and Malezieux at D'Harmental's

lodgings, who, being the least known, would be the least watched.

In about an hour the Marquis de Pompadour arrived. The parliament had at first wished to make opposition, but everything had given way before the will of the regent. The King of Spain's letters had been read and condemned. It had been decided that the dukes and peers should rank immediately after the princes of the blood. The honors of the legitimated princes were restricted to the simple rank of their peerages. Finally, the Duc du Maine lost the superintendence of the king's education, which was confided to the Duc de Bourbon. The Comte de Toulouse alone was maintained, during his lifetime, in his privileges and prerogatives.

Malezieux arrived in his turn ; he had recently left the duchess. They had just given her notice to leave her apartments in the Tuileries, which belonged henceforward to Monsieur le Duc. Such an affront had, as may easily be understood, exasperated the granddaughter of the great Condé. She had flown into a violent passion, broken all the looking-glasses with her own hands, and had all the furniture thrown out of the window ; then, this performance finished, she had got into her carriage, sending Laval to Rambouillet, in order to urge Monsieur du Maine to some vigorous action, and charging Malezieux to assemble all her friends that evening at the Arsenal.

Pompadour and Brigaud cried out against the imprudence of such a meeting. Madame du Maine was evidently watched. To go to the Arsenal the day when it was known that her anger was at the highest pitch would be to compromise themselves openly. Pompadour and Brigaud were therefore in favor of going and begging her Highness to appoint some other time or place for the rendezvous. Malezieux and D'Harmental were of the same

opinion regarding the danger of the step; but they both declared — the first from devotion, the second from a sense of duty — that the more perilous the order was, the more clearly honor called them to obey.

The discussion, as always happens in such circumstances, began to degenerate into a pretty sharp altercation, when they heard the steps of two persons mounting the stairs. As the three who had appointed a meeting at D'Harmental's were all assembled, Brigaud, who with his ear always on the alert had heard the sound first, put his finger to his mouth, to impose silence on the disputants. They could plainly hear the steps approaching; then a low whispering, as of two persons questioning; finally, the door opened, and gave entrance to a soldier of the French Guard and a little grisette.

The guardsman was the Baron de Valef.

As to the grisette, she threw off the black veil which hid her face, and they recognized Madame du Maine.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

MAN PROPOSES.

"Your Highness here! your Highness at my lodging!" cried D'Harmental. "What have I done to merit such an honor?"

"The hour is come, Chevalier," said the duchess, "when it is right that we should show those whom we esteem the opinion we hold of their merits. It shall never be said that the friends of Madame du Maine expose themselves for her, and that she does not expose herself with them. Thank God, I am the granddaughter of the great Condé, and I feel that I am worthy of my ancestor."

"Your Highness is most welcome," said Pompadour; "for your arrival will relieve us of a serious embarrassment. Decided, as we were, to obey your orders, we nevertheless hesitated at the idea of the danger incurred by an assembly at the Arsenal at such a moment as the present, when the police had their eyes upon it."

"And I thought with you, Marquis; so instead of waiting for you, I resolved to come and seek you. The baron accompanied me. I went to the house of the Comtesse de Chavigny, a friend of De Launay, who lives in the Rue du Mail. We had clothes brought there; and as we were only a few steps off, we came here on foot, and here we are. On my honor, Messire Voyer d'Argenson would be clever indeed if he recognized us in this disguise."

"I see with pleasure," said Malezieux, "that your Highness is not cast down by the events of this horrible day."

"Cast down! I, Malezieux! I hope you know me too well to have feared it for a single instant. Cast down! On the contrary, I never felt more vigor, or more determination. Oh, if I only were a man!"

"Let your Highness command," said D'Harmental, "and everything that you could do if you yourself could act, we will do, — we, who stand in your stead."

"No, no; it is impossible that any other should do what I should have done."

"Nothing is impossible, Madame, to five men as devoted as we are. Moreover, our interest demands a prompt and energetic course of action. It is not reasonable to believe that the regent will stop at the point he has reached. The day after to-morrow — to-morrow — this evening, perhaps — we shall all be arrested. Dubois gives out that the paper which he saved from the flames at the Prince de Cellamare's is nothing less than the list of the conspirators. In that case, he knows all our names. We have, then, at this very moment a sword hanging over each of our heads. Do not let us wait till the thread which suspends it snaps; let us seize it, and strike!"

"Strike! What, where, and how?" asked Brigaud. "That abominable parliament has destroyed all our schemes. Have we measures taken, or a plot made out?"

"The best plan which has been conceived," said Pompadour, "and the one which offered the greatest chance of success, was the first; as is proved by the fact that but for an unheard-of circumstance which intervened to defeat it, it would have succeeded."

"Well, if the plan was good then, it is so still," said Valef; "let us return to it!"

"Yes, but in failing," said Malezieux, "this plan put the regent on his guard."

"On the contrary," said Pompadour, "in consequence of that very failure, it will be supposed that we have abandoned it."

"And the proof is," said Valef, "that the regent, on this head, takes fewer precautions than ever. For example: since his daughter, Mademoiselle de Chartres, has become Abbess of Chelles, he goes to see her every week; and he goes through the Bois de Vincennes without guards, with only a coachman and two lackeys, and that at eight or nine o'clock at night."

"And what day does he pay this visit?" asked Brigaud.

"Wednesday."

"Wednesday? that is to-morrow," said the duchess.

"Brigaud," said Valef, "have you still the passport for Spain?"

"Yes."

"And the same facilities for the journey?"

"The same. The post-master is with us, and we shall have only to explain to him."

"Well," said Valef, "if her royal Highness will allow me, I will to-morrow call together seven or eight friends, wait for the regent in the Bois de Vincennes, carry him off, and in three days I am at Pampeluna."

"An instant, my dear Baron," said D'Harmental. "I would observe to you that you are stepping into my shoes, and that of right this undertaking belongs to me."

"You, my dear Chevalier! you have already done what you had to do; now it is our turn."

"Not at all, if you please, Valef. My honor is concerned in it, for I have revenge to take. You will therefore annoy me infinitely by insisting in the matter."

"All that I can do for you, my dear D'Harmental," said Valef, "is to leave it to her Highness's choice. She knows that we are equally devoted to her; let her decide."

"Will you accept my arbitration, Chevalier?" said the duchess.

"Yes, for I trust to your justice, Madame," said D'Harmental.

"And you are right; yes, the honor of the undertaking belongs to you. I place in your hands the fate of the son of Louis XIV., and of the granddaughter of the great Condé. I trust entirely to your devotion and courage; and I have the greater hope of your success this time because fortune owes you a compensation. To you, my dear D'Harmental, all the peril; but, also, to you all the honor!"

"I accept both with gratitude," said D'Harmental, kissing respectfully the hand which the duchess offered him; "and to-morrow, at this hour, I shall be dead, or the regent will be on the way to Spain."

"Very good," said Pompadour, "that is what I call speaking; and if you want any one to give you a helping hand, my dear Chevalier, count on me."

"And on me," said Valef.

"And are we, then, good for nothing?" said Malezieux.

"My dear Chancellor," said the duchess, "to each one his share. To poets, churchmen, and magistrates, advice; to soldiers, execution. Chevalier, are you sure of finding the men who assisted you before?"

"I am sure of their chief, at least."

"When shall you see him?"

"This evening."

"At what time?"

"Directly, if your Highness wishes it."

"The sooner the better."

"In a quarter of an hour I will be with him."

"Where can we learn the result of the interview?"

"I will come to your Highness, wheresoever you may be."

"Not to the Arsenal," said Brigaud; "it is too dangerous."

"Can we not wait here?" asked the duchess.

"I would observe to your Highness," said Brigaud, "that my pupil is a steady fellow, receiving scarcely any one, and that a long visit might arouse suspicion."

"Can we not appoint a meeting where there would be no such fear?" asked Pompadour.

"Certainly," said the duchess; "at the stone in the Champs Élysées, for instance. Malezieux and I will come there in a carriage without livery and without arms. Pompadour, Valef, and Brigaud will meet us there, each one separately; there we will wait for D'Harmental, and arrange the final preparations."

"That will suit well," said D'Harmental, "for my man lives in the Rue St. Honoré."

"You know, Chevalier," replied the duchess; "that you may promise as much money as you like."

"I undertake to fill the purse," said Brigaud.

"You will do well, Abbé, for I know who will undertake to empty it," said D'Harmental, smiling.

"Then all is agreed," said the duchess. "In an hour, in the Champs Élysées."

Then the duchess, having readjusted her mantle so as to hide her face, took Valef's arm and went out. Malezieux followed at a little distance, taking care not to lose sight of her. Brigaud, Pompadour, and D'Harmental went out together, and D'Harmental went directly to the Rue St. Honoré.

Whether by chance or by calculation on the part of

the duchess, who appreciated D'Harmental, and understood how fully she might rely upon him, the chevalier found himself more than ever put forward in the conspiracy. But his honor was engaged; he had considered himself obliged to do what he had done; and although he foresaw the terrible consequences of the step which he was about to take, he went boldly forward, resolved to sacrifice everything, even his life and his love, to the fulfilment of his promise.

He presented himself at La Fillon's with the same tranquillity and resolution as before, although many things were altered in his life since then; and having been, as before, received by the mistress of the house in person, he inquired if Captain Roquefinette were visible.

Without doubt La Fillon had expected a much less moral demand; for on recognizing D'Harmental, she could not repress a movement of surprise. Nevertheless, as if she were still in doubt as to his identity, she asked if he was not the same person who two months before had come there to inquire for the captain. D'Harmental, who thought that the previous visit would be to his advantage in overcoming obstacles, should any arise, replied in the affirmative. Nor was his conjecture at fault. La Fillon, as soon as she was informed on this point, called to her a sort of Marton, of quite elegant appearance, and directed her to conduct the chevalier to chamber No. 72 in the fifth story. The girl obeyed, took a candle, and ascended the stairs, assuming meanwhile all the affectations of a soubrette of Marivaux. D'Harmental followed her. This time no joyous song guided him in his ascent; all was silent in the house. The serious events of the day doubtless had kept away from their usual rendezvous the patrons of the captain's worthy hostess; and as the chevalier himself had his mind directed at that moment to grave mat-

ters, he mounted the six flights without paying the least attention to the affectations of his conductress, who on arriving at No. 72 turned to him and asked with a gracious smile if he was not mistaken, and if it was really the captain whom he wished to see.

For an answer the chevalier knocked on the door.

"Enter," said Roquefinette, with his strong bass voice.

The chevalier slipped a louis into the hand of his guide, opened the door, and went in.

The same change was observable in the interior as in the exterior. Roquefinette was not found sitting, as on the former occasion, among the *débris* of a feast, surrounded by slaves, and smoking his long pipe. He was alone in a little dark attic, lighted by a single candle, which, nearly burnt out, gave more smoke than flame, and whose flickering light imparted a fantastic expression to the harsh face of the brave captain, who was standing leaning against the chimney-piece.

"Ah!" said Roquefinette, in a slightly ironical tone, "it is you, Chevalier? I expected you."

"You expected me, Captain? And what induced you to do so?"

"Events, Chevalier, events."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you thought you could make open war, and consequently you put poor Captain Roquefinette aside as a bandit, who is good for nothing but a nocturnal blow at a street corner, or in a wood. You wanted to set up again your little League, to reopen your little Fronde, — and here is friend Dubois, who knows all about it; here are the peers on whom you counted going back on you; here is parliament saying, 'Yes,' instead of saying, 'No.' Now you come back to the captain. My dear Captain here! my good Captain there! Is not this exactly what

has happened, Chevalier? Well, here is the captain; what do you want of him? Speak."

"Really, my dear Captain," said D'Harmental, not knowing exactly how to take this speech, "there is some truth in what you say. Only you are mistaken if you think we had forgotten you. If our plan had succeeded, you would have had proof of my good memory, and I should have come to offer you my credit, as I now come to ask your assistance."

"Hum!" said the captain, shaking his head; "for the last three days, while I have inhabited this new apartment, I have made many reflections on the vanity of human affairs, and have more than once felt inclined to retire altogether from these enterprises, or, if I did undertake one, to take care that it should be sufficiently brilliant to insure my future."

"Well, what I come to propose to you is just what you want. Without preamble, it is —"

"Is what?" asked the captain, who, seeing D'Harmental stop and look around uneasily, had waited two or three seconds for the conclusion of the sentence.

"Pardon, Captain, but I thought —"

"What did you think, Chevalier?"

"I thought I heard steps, — a sort of creaking in the wall."

"Ah!" said the captain, "there are not a few rats in this establishment, I can tell you."

"Yes, that is it; I am mistaken," said D'Harmental. "Well, my dear Roquefinette, we wish to profit by the regent's returning unguarded from Chelles, to carry him off, and take him to Spain."

"Pardon; but before going any further, Chevalier," said Roquefinette, "I must warn you that this is a new treaty, and that every new treaty implies new conditions."

"No need of discussions on that point, Captain. You shall yourself name the conditions; but can you still dispose of your men?"

"I can."

"Will they be ready at two o'clock to-morrow?"

"They will."

"That is all that is necessary."

"Pardon; something else is necessary, — money to buy a horse and arms."

"There are a hundred louis in that purse; take it."

"It is well; you shall have an account of it."

"Then to-morrow, at my house, at two o'clock."

"Agreed."

"Adieu, Captain."

"*Au revoir*, Chevalier. You will not be surprised if I am somewhat exacting?"

"I want you to be so. You know that last time I complained only of your being too modest."

"Good!" said the captain; "you are a generous fellow. Let me light you; it would be a pity that a brave man like you should break his neck."

And the captain took the candle, which, now burnt down to the paper, threw a splendid light over the staircase, and D'Harmental descended without accident. On reaching the last step, he repeated to the captain a request that he would be punctual; and the captain promised emphatically that he would.

D'Harmental had not forgotten that Madame du Maine waited with anxiety for the result of the interview. He did not trouble himself, therefore, about what had become of La Fillon, whom he did not see on leaving; and having gone down the Rue des Feuillans, he passed along the Champs Élysées, which at that hour was almost com-

pletely deserted. Having arrived at the stone, he noticed a carriage standing on the opposite side of the road, while two men were walking at a little distance from it in a cross-road. He approached the carriage; a woman, seeing him, put her head impatiently out of the window. The chevalier recognized Madame du Maine; Malezieux and Valef were with her. As to the two out walking, — who, on seeing D'Harmental, eagerly approached the carriage, — it is needless to say that they were Brigaud and Pompadour.

The chevalier, without naming Roquefinette, or enlarging on the character of the illustrious captain, told them in a few words what had taken place. This recital was welcomed by a general exclamation of joy. The duchess gave D'Harmental her hand to kiss; the men pressed his. It was agreed that the next day at two o'clock, the duchess, Pompadour, Laval, Valef, Malezieux, and Brigaud should meet at the residence of D'Avranches's mother, No. 15 Faubourg St. Antoine, and that they should there await the event. This was to be announced to them by D'Avranches himself, who at three o'clock was to be at the Barrière du Trône with two horses, — one for himself, the other for the chevalier. He was to follow D'Harmental at a distance, and return to announce what had taken place. Five other horses, saddled and bridled, were to be ready in the stables of the house in the Faubourg St. Antoine, so that the conspirators might fly at once in case of the chevalier's failure.

These plans settled, the duchess forced the chevalier to seat himself beside her. The duchess wished to drive him home; but he told her that the appearance of a carriage at Madame Denis's door would produce too much sensation, and that, flattering as it would be to him, it would be too dangerous for all. In consequence, the duchess set D'Har

mental down in the Place des Victoires, after repeatedly expressing her gratitude for his devotion.

It was ten o'clock in the evening. D'Harmental had scarcely seen Bathilde during the day; he wished to see her again. He was sure to find her at her window; but that was not sufficient, for what he had to say was too serious and too private to be thrown in that way from one side of the street to the other. He was thinking under what pretext he could present himself to Bathilde at so late an hour, when he thought he saw a woman at the door of her house. He advanced and recognized Nanette.

Nanette was there by Bathilde's order. The poor girl was in a state of distressing anxiety. Buvat had not returned. All the evening she had remained at the window to watch for D'Harmental, but had not seen him. As she recurred to the vague ideas which had entered her mind in the night on which the chevalier had attempted to carry off the regent, it seemed to her that there must be some connection between Buvat's strange disappearance and the melancholy which she had remarked the day before in D'Harmental's face. Nanette was waiting at the door for Buvat and the chevalier. The chevalier had returned; Nanette remained to wait for Buvat, and D'Harmental went up to Bathilde.

Bathilde had heard and recognized his step, and ran to open the door. At the first glance she noticed the pensive expression of his face. "Oh, *mon Dieu!* Raoul!" she exclaimed, drawing the young man into her room and closing the door behind him, "has anything happened to you?"

"Bathilde," said D'Harmental, with a melancholy smile, "you have often told me that there is in me something unknown and mysterious, which frightens you."

"Oh, yes, yes!" cried Bathilde; "and it is the only torment of my life, — my only fear for the future."

"And you are right; for before I knew you, Bathilde, before I had seen you, I had abandoned a part of my free-will. This portion of myself no longer belongs to me, but submits to a supreme law, and to unforeseen events; it is a black point in a clear sky. According to the way the wind blows, it may disappear as a vapor or increase into a storm. The hand which holds and guides mine may lead me to the highest favor or to the most complete disgrace. Tell me, Bathilde, are you disposed to share my good and evil fortune, — the calm and the tempest?"

"Everything with you, Raoul."

"Think of what you are undertaking, Bathilde. It may be a happy and a brilliant life which is reserved for you; it may be exile; it may be captivity; perhaps — perhaps you will be a widow before you are a wife."

Bathilde turned so pale that Raoul thought she would fall, and held out his arms to support her. But Bathilde was full of energy and will; she regained her self-command, and holding out her hand to D'Harmental, "Raoul," said she, "have I not already told you that I love you; that I never have loved and never can love any other than you? It seems to me that all these promises you ask are included in those words; but since you wish them renewed, I repeat them. Your life shall be my life, Raoul; your death shall be my death. Both are in the hands of God. May the will of God be done on earth as it is in heaven!"

"And I, Bathilde," said D'Harmental, leading her before the crucifix, "I swear that from this moment you are my wife before God and before men; and while the events which may dispose of my life leave me nothing but my

love to offer to you, that love is yours, — profound, unalterable, eternal. Bathilde, a first kiss to your husband." The two lovers fell into each other's arms, and exchanged their first kiss while they renewed their vows.

When D'Harmental left Bathilde, Buvat had not returned.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

DAVID AND GOLIATH.

Toward ten o'clock in the morning the Abbé Brigaud entered D'Harmental's room ; he brought him twenty thousand francs, partly in gold, partly in Spanish paper. The duchess had passed the night at the Comtesse de Chavigny's, in the Rue du Mail. The plans of the preceding day were in no degree changed, and it had been ascertained that the regent would pay his accustomed visit to Chelles. At ten o'clock Brigaud and D'Harmental went down, — Brigaud to join Pompadour and Valef on the Boulevard du Temple, and D'Harmental to visit Bathilde.

Uneasiness was at its height in the little household. Buvat was still absent ; and it was easy to see by Bathilde's eyes that she had slept but little, and had wept much. As soon as she saw D'Harmental, she understood that some expedition like that which had so alarmed her was preparing. D'Harmental again wore that dark costume in which she had never seen him but on that evening when, on returning, he had thrown his mantle on a chair, and displayed to her sight the pistols in his belt. Moreover, his boots, armed with spurs, indicated that he expected to ride during the day. All these things would have appeared insignificant at any other time ; but after the scene of the night before, after the nocturnal betrothal we have described, they took a new and grave importance. Bathilde tried at first to make the chevalier speak ; but he

told her that the secret she asked did not belong to himself, and she desisted.

An hour after D'Harmental's arrival Nanette appeared with an expression of consternation on her face. She came from the library; Buvat had not been there, and no one had heard anything of him. Bathilde could contain herself no longer; she fell into Raoul's arms, and burst into tears.

Then Raoul confessed to her his fears that the papers which the pretended Prince de Listhnay had given Buvat to copy were papers of the greatest political importance. Buvat had perhaps been compromised and arrested. But Buvat had nothing to fear; the passive part which he had played in this affair did not endanger him in the least.

Bathilde, having feared some much greater misfortune, eagerly seized on this idea, which left her at least some hope. She did not confess to herself that the greater part of her uneasiness was not for Buvat, and that all the tears she had shed were not for the absent.

When D'Harmental was near Bathilde, time appeared to fly; he thought he had been with her a few minutes only, when the clock struck half-past one. Remembering that at two o'clock he had to arrange his new treaty with Roquefinette, he rose to go. Bathilde turned pale. D'Harmental, to reassure her, promised to come to her again after the departure of the person he expected, and for whom he was obliged to leave her. That promise somewhat tranquillized the poor child, who tried to smile when she saw what deep impression her sadness made on Raoul. Twenty times they renewed the vows of the previous night, and twenty times promised to be devoted to each other. They parted sorrowfully, but trusting in each other, and sure of their mutual love. Besides, as we have said, they thought they were parting for only an hour.

The chevalier had been only a few minutes at his window when he saw Roquefinette appear at the corner of the Rue Montmartre. He was mounted on a dapple-gray horse, both swift and strong, and evidently chosen by a connoisseur. He came along leisurely, like a man who is indifferent whether he is seen or not. On arriving at the door, he dismounted, fastened his horse, and ascended the stairs. As on the day before, his face was grave and pensive; his compressed lips indicated some fixed determination, and D'Harmental received him with a smile which met with no answer on the captain's face. D'Harmental at a glance took in all these different signs.

"Well, Captain," said he, "I see that you are still punctuality itself."

"It is a military habit, Chevalier, and is not astonishing in an old soldier."

"And therefore I had no doubt in regard to you; but you might not have been able to meet your men."

"I told you I knew where to find them."

"And where are they?"

"In the horse-market at the Porte St. Martin."

"Are you not afraid they will be noticed?"

"How should twelve or fifteen men dressed as peasants be noticed among three hundred other peasants, buying and selling horses? It is like a needle in a bottle of hay; none but myself can find the needle."

"But how can these men accompany you, Captain?"

"The simplest thing in the world. Each one has bargained for the horse which suits him. Each one has offered a price, to which the vender replies by another. I arrive, give to each twenty-five or thirty louis. Every one pays for his horse, has it saddled, mounts, slips into the holsters the pistols which he has in his belt, and, by a different route from those taken by the others, arrives

at a given place in the Bois de Vincennes at five o'clock. Then only I explain to them for what they are wanted. I again distribute money, put myself at the head of my squadron, and we strike the blow, — supposing that you and I agree on the conditions."

"Well, these conditions, Captain," said D'Harmental, "let us discuss them. I think I have arranged so that you will be satisfied with those that I propose to you."

"Let us hear them," said Roquefinette, sitting down by the table.

"First, double the sum you received last time," said the chevalier.

"Ah!" said Roquefinette, "I do not care for money."

"What! you do not care for money, Captain?"

"Not the least in the world."

"What do you care for, then?"

"A position."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, Chevalier, that every day I am four and twenty hours older, and that with age comes philosophy."

"Well, Captain," said D'Harmental, who now began to be seriously uneasy, "what is the ambition of your philosophy?"

"I have told you, Chevalier. A position suitable to my long services, — not in France, you understand. In France I have too many enemies, beginning with the lieutenant of police; but in Spain, for instance. Ah, that would suit me well. A fine country, beautiful women, plenty of doubloons! Decidedly, I should like a rank in Spain."

"The thing is possible; it depends on the rank you desire."

"Well, you know, Chevalier, when one is wishing, it is as well to wish for something worth the trouble."

"You make me uneasy, Monsieur," said D'Harmental, "for I have not the seals of King Philip, to sign brevets in his name. But never mind; speak."

"Well," said Roquefinette, "I see so many greenhorns at the heads of regiments that I also have thought of being a colonel."

"Colonel? Impossible!"

"Why so?"

"Because, if they make you a colonel, you who only hold a secondary position in the affair, what am I to ask, — I, who am at the head?"

"Very well; what I mean is this: I propose that we change positions for the moment. You remember what I said to you on a certain evening in the Rue de Valois?"

'Aid my memory, Captain. I have unfortunately forgotten."

"I told you that if I had an affair like this to manage, things would go better. I added that I would speak to you of it again. I do so now."

"What the devil are you talking about, Captain?"

"A simple matter, Chevalier. We made a first attempt together, which failed. Then you changed batteries; you thought you could do without me, and you failed again. The first time you failed at night, and without noise; we each went our own way, and there was nothing known about it. The second time, on the contrary, you failed in broad daylight, and with an *éclat* which has compromised all; so that if you do not save yourselves by a bold stroke, you are all lost, as Dubois has your names, and to-morrow, to-night perhaps, you all will be arrested, — knights, barons, dukes, and princes. Now, there is in the world one man, and one only, who can free you from your troubles. That man is Captain Roquefinette; and you offer him the same place he held before! You try to bar-

gain with him! Fie, Chevalier! What the devil! you understand,—demands increase with the services to be rendered. I am now an important personage. Treat me as such, or I put my hands in my pockets, and leave Dubois to do as he likes."

D'Harmental bit his lips, but he understood that he had to treat with a man who was accustomed to sell his services as dear as possible; and as what the captain said of their necessity was literally true, he restrained his impatience and his pride.

"So, then," replied D'Harmental, "you wish to be a colonel?"

"That is my idea."

"But suppose I make you this promise, who can answer that I have influence enough to ratify it?"

"And therefore, Chevalier, I reckon on managing my little affairs myself."

"Where?"

"At Madrid."

"Who told you that I shall take you there?"

"I do not know if you will take me there; but I know that I shall go there."

"You, to Madrid! What for?"

"To convey the regent."

"You are mad!"

"Come, come, Chevalier, no big words. You ask my conditions; I tell them to you. They do not suit you. Good-evening. We are not the worse friends for that." And Roquefinette rose, took his hat, and was going toward the door.

"What! are you going?" said D'Harmental.

"Certainly."

"But you forget, Captain —"

"Ah! it is true," said Roquefinette, intentionally mis-

taking D'Harmental's meaning; "you gave me a hundred louis. I must give you an account of them." He took his purse from his pocket. "A horse, thirty louis; a pair of double-barrelled pistols, ten louis; a saddle, bridle, etc., two louis,— total, forty-two louis. There are fifty-eight louis in this purse; the horse, pistols, saddle, and bridle are yours. Count; we are quits." And he threw the purse on the table.

"But that is not what I have to say to you, Captain."

"What is it, then?"

"That it is impossible to confide to you a mission of such importance."

"It must be so, nevertheless, or not at all. I must convey the regent to Madrid, and I alone, or he remains at the Palais Royal."

"And you think yourself worthy to take from the hands of Philippe d'Orléans the sword which conquered at Lérida La Pucelle, and which rested by the sceptre of Louis XIV. on the velvet cushion with the golden tassels?"

"I heard in Italy that François I., at the battle of Pavia, gave up his to a butcher." The captain pressed his hat on his head, and once more approached the door.

"Listen, Captain," said D'Harmental, in his most conciliating tone; "a truce to arguments and quotations. Let us split the difference. I will conduct the regent to Spain, and you shall accompany me."

"Yes, so that the poor captain may be lost in the dust raised by the dashing chevalier; that the brilliant colonel may throw the old trooper into the shade! Impossible, Chevalier, impossible! I will have the management of the affair, or I will have nothing to do with it."

"But this is treason!" cried D'Harmental.

"Treason, Chevalier! And where have you seen, if

you please, that Captain Roquefinette is a traitor? Where are the agreements which I have made and not kept? Where are the secrets which I have divulged? I, a traitor! Good heavens, Chevalier, it was only the day before yesterday that I was offered my weight in gold to betray you, and I refused! No, no! Yesterday you came and asked me to aid you a second time. I told you that I was ready, but on new conditions. Well, I have just told you those conditions. Accept them or refuse them. Where do you see treason in all this?"

"And if I were weak enough to accept these conditions, Monsieur, do you imagine that the confidence which her royal Highness the Duchesse du Maine reposes in the Chevalier d'Harmental can be transferred to Captain Roquefinette?"

"What the devil has the Duchesse du Maine to do with all this? You undertake a piece of business; there are material hindrances in the way of your executing it yourself; you hand it over to me, — that is all."

"That is to say," answered D'Harmental, shaking his head, "that you wish to be free to loose the regent, if the regent offers you, for leaving him in France, twice as much as I offer you for taking him to Spain."

"Perhaps," replied Roquefinette.

"Hearken, Captain," said D'Harmental, making a new effort to retain his *sang-froid*, and endeavoring to renew the negotiations, "I will give you twenty thousand francs down."

"Trash!" answered the captain.

"I will take you with me to Spain."

"Fiddlesticks!" said the captain.

"And I engage on my honor to obtain you a regiment."

Roquefinette began to hum a tune.

"Take care," said D'Harmental, "it is more dangerous

for you now, at the point at which we have arrived, and with the terrible secrets which you know, to refuse than to accept."

"And what will happen, then, if I refuse?" asked Roquefinette.

"It will happen, Captain, that you will not leave this room."

"And who will prevent me?"

"I!" cried D'Harmental, bounding before the door, a pistol in each hand.

"You?" said Roquefinette, making a step toward the chevalier, and then crossing his arms and regarding him fixedly.

"One step more, Captain," said the chevalier, "and I give you my word I will blow out your brains."

"You blow out my brains, you! For that it is necessary, in the first place, that you should not tremble like an old woman. Do you know what you will do? You will miss me; the noise will alarm the neighbors, who will call the guard, and they will question me as to the reasons of your shooting at me, and I shall be obliged to tell them."

"Yes, you are right, Captain," cried the chevalier, uncocking his pistols, and replacing them in his belt, "and I shall be obliged to kill you more honorably than you deserve. Draw, Monsieur, draw!"

And D'Harmental, leaning his left foot against the door, drew his sword, and placed himself on guard. It was a court sword, a thin ribbon of steel, set in a gold handle. Roquefinette began to laugh.

"With what shall I defend myself, Chevalier? Do you happen to have one of your mistress's knitting-needles here?"

"Defend yourself with your own sword, Monsieur;

long as it is, you see that I am placed so that I cannot make a step to avoid it."

"What do you think of that, my dear?" said the captain, addressing his blade.

"It thinks that you are a coward, Captain," cried D'Harmental, "since it is necessary to strike you in the face to make you fight." And with a movement as quick as lightning, D'Harmental cut the captain across the face with his rapier, leaving on the cheek a long blue mark like the mark of a whip.

Roquefinette gave a cry which might have been taken for the roaring of a lion, and bounding back a step, placed himself on guard, his sword in his hand. Then began between these two men a duel, terrible, furious, silent, for both were intent on their work, and each understood what sort of an adversary he had to contend with. By a reaction very easy to be understood, it was now D'Harmental who was calm, and Roquefinette who was excited. Every instant he menaced D'Harmental with his long sword; but the frail rapier followed it as iron follows the loadstone, twisting round it like a viper. At the end of about five minutes the chevalier had not made a single lunge, but had parried all those of his adversary. At last, on a more rapid thrust than the others, he came too late to parry, and felt the point of his adversary's sword at his breast. At the same time a red spot spread from the chevalier's shirt to his lace frill. D'Harmental saw it, and with a spring engaged so near to Roquefinette that the hilts touched. The captain instantly perceived the disadvantage of his long sword in such a position; a thrust "sur les armes," and he was lost. He made a spring backward, his foot slipped on the newly waxed floor, and his sword-hand rose in spite of himself. By a natural movement D'Harmental took advantage of it, lunged

within, and pierced the captain's chest, where the blade disappeared to the hilt. He recovered to parry in return, but the precaution was needless; the captain stood still an instant, opened his eyes wildly, dropped his sword, and pressing his two hands to the wound, fell at full length on the floor.

"Curse the rapier!" he murmured, and expired; the strip of steel had pierced his heart.

Meanwhile, D'Harmental remained on guard, with his eyes fixed on the captain, lowering his sword only when the dying man let his slip. Finally, he found himself face to face with a corpse; but this corpse had its eyes open, and continued to look at him. Leaning against the door, the chevalier remained an instant thunderstruck; his hair bristled, his forehead became covered with perspiration. He did not dare to move; his victory seemed to him a dream. Suddenly the mouth of the dying man set in a last convulsion; the partisan was dead, and his secret had died with him.

How to recognize, in the midst of three hundred peasants, buying and selling horses, the twelve or fifteen pretended ones who were to carry off the regent?

D'Harmental uttered a low cry; he would have given ten years of his own life to add ten minutes to that of the captain. He took the body in his arms, raised it, called it, and startled on seeing his reddened hands, let it fall into a sea of blood, which, following the inclination of the boards down a channel in the floor, reached the door, and began to spread over the threshold.

At that moment the horse, which was tied to the shutter, neighed violently. D'Harmental made three steps toward the door; then he remembered that Roquefinette might have some memorandum about him which would serve as a guide. In spite of his repugnance, he

searched the pockets of the corpse, one after another; but the only papers he found were two or three old bills of fare, and a love-letter from La Normande.

Then as he had nothing more to do in that room, he filled his pockets with gold and notes, closed the door after him, descended the stairs rapidly, leaped upon the impatient horse, set off at a gallop toward the Rue Gros-Chenet, and disappeared round the angle nearest to the Boulevard.

CHAPTER XL.

THE SAVIOR OF FRANCE.

WHILE this terrible catastrophe was occurring in the attic of Madame Denis's house, Bathilde, uneasy at seeing her neighbor's window so long shut, had opened hers, and the first thing she saw was the dappled-gray horse attached to the shutter; but as she had not seen the captain go in, she thought that the steed was for Raoul, and that reflection immediately reawakened her fears. She consequently remained at the window, looking in every direction, and trying to read in the physiognomy of every passer-by whether that individual was an actor in the mysterious drama which was preparing, and in which she instinctively understood that Raoul was to play the chief part. She remained, then, with a beating heart, her neck stretched out, and her eyes wandering hither and thither, when suddenly her restless glances were fixed in one direction. At the same moment the young girl uttered a cry of joy, for she saw Buvat coming round the corner from the Rue Montmartre. Indeed, it was the worthy caligraphist in person, who, looking behind him from time to time as if he feared pursuit, advanced with his cane extended horizontally, and at a pace as rapid as his short legs would allow.

While he enters, and embraces his ward, let us look back and relate the causes of that absence which, we are sure, has brought as much uneasiness to our readers as it brought to poor Bathilde and the good Nanette.

It will be remembered that Buvat, driven by fear of torture to the revelation of the conspiracy, had been forced by Dubois to make every day, at his house, a copy of the documents which the pretended Prince de Listhnay had given him. It was thus that the minister of the regent had successively learned all the projects of the conspirators, which he had defeated by the arrest of Maréchal de Villeroy, and by the convocation of parliament.

Monday morning Buvat had arrived as usual with new packages of papers which D'Avranches had given him the day before. They comprised a manifesto prepared by Malezieux and Pompadour, and letters from the chief noblemen of Bretagne, who, as we have seen, supported the conspiracy. Buvat applied himself to his work with his usual diligence; but about four o'clock, as he rose and took his hat in one hand and his cane in the other, Dubois came in and invited him to go up with him to a little room above that where he had been working, and having arrived there, asked him what he thought of the apartment. Flattered by this deference of the prime minister to his judgment, Buvat hastened to reply that he thought it very pleasant.

"So much the better," answered Dubois; "and I am very glad that it is to your taste, for it is yours."

"Mine!" cried Buvat, astonished.

"Certainly; is it astonishing that I should wish to have under my hand, or rather under my eyes, a personage as important as yourself?"

"But," asked Buvat, "am I then going to live in the Palais Royal?"

"For some days, at any rate," answered Dubois.

"Monseigneur, let me at least inform Bathilde."

"That is just the thing to be prevented; Bathilde must not be informed."

"But you will permit that the first time I go out —"

"As long as you remain here, you will not go out."

"But," cried Buvat, with terror, "I am, then, a prisoner?"

"A State prisoner, as you have said, my dear Buvat. But calm yourself; your captivity will not continue long, and while it lasts we will bestow on you all the attentions that are due to the savior of France; for you have saved France, Monsieur Buvat."

"I have saved France," cried Buvat, "and am a prisoner under bolts and bars!"

"And where the devil do you see bolts and bars, my dear Buvat?" said Dubois, laughing. "The door shuts with a latch, and has not even a lock; as to the window, yours looks on the gardens of the Palais Royal, and has not even the least little lattice to intercept the view, — a superb view. You are lodged here like the regent himself."

"Oh, my little room! Oh, my terrace!" murmured Buvat, falling back despairingly into an armchair.

Dubois, who had other things to do than to console Buvat, went out, and placed a sentinel at the door.

The explanation of this step is easy. Dubois feared that, seeing the arrest of Villeroy, the conspirators would suspect from what source the information came; and that Buvat, on being questioned, would confess that he had divulged everything. This confession doubtless would have arrested the conspirators in the midst of their schemes, which, on the contrary, Dubois, informed beforehand of all their plans, wished to see carried to a point, so that he might make an end, once for all, of these little conspiracies.

Toward eight o'clock in the evening, Buvat heard a great noise at his door, and a sort of metallic clashing, which did not tend to reassure him. He had heard many lamentable stories of State prisoners who had been assassi-

nated in their prisons, and he rose, trembling, and ran to the window. The court and gardens of the Palais Royal were full of people the galleries began to be illuminated; the whole scene was full of movement, gayety, and light. He heaved a profound sigh, thinking that perhaps he must soon bid adieu to that world of life and activity. At that instant the door was opened; Buvat turned round, shuddering, and saw two tall footmen in red livery bringing in a well-supplied table. The metallic noise which had so much disturbed him had been the clattering of the silver plates and dishes.

Buvat's first impulse was to give thanks to God that a danger so imminent as that into which he thought he had fallen was transformed into a situation apparently so tolerable; but almost immediately the idea occurred to him that the deadly intentions entertained against him were still the same, and that only the mode of their execution was changed. Instead of being assassinated, like Jeansans-Peur, or the Duc de Guise, he was to be poisoned, like the Dauphin, or the Duc de Burgundy. He threw a rapid glance on the two footmen, and thought he observed in them a certain sinister appearance which marked them as the agents of a secret vengeance. From this instant his determination was taken; and in spite of the scent of the dishes, which appeared to him only an additional allurement, he refused all sustenance, saying majestically that he was neither hungry nor thirsty.

The lackeys looked at each other knowingly. They were sharp fellows, and had understood Buvat's character at a glance; and not understanding how a man should not be hungry when before a pheasant stuffed with truffles, or thirsty before a bottle of chambertin, they had penetrated the prisoner's fears pretty quickly. They exchanged a few words in a low tone; and the bolder of

the two, seeing a way of drawing some profit from the circumstances, advanced toward Buvat, who recoiled before him as far as the chimney, which prevented his receding farther.

"Monsieur," said he, in a reassuring tone, "we understand your fears; and as we are honest servants, we will show you that we are incapable of lending ourselves to the dealings which you suspect. During the time that you remain here, my comrade and I, each in turn, will taste all the dishes which are brought you, and all the wines which are sent in, happy if by our devotion we can restore your tranquillity."

"Monsieur," answered Buvat, ashamed that his secret sentiments had been discovered thus, — "Monsieur, you are very polite, but in truth I am neither hungry nor thirsty."

"Never mind, Monsieur," said the man; "as my comrade and myself desire not to leave the smallest doubt on your mind, we will make the test we have promised you. Comtois, my friend," continued the fellow, sitting down in the place which had been intended for Buvat, "do me the favor to help me to a little of that soup, a wing of that pullet in rice, and two fingers of that chambertin. There; that is right. To your health, Monsieur!"

"Monsieur," said Buvat, opening his eyes, and looking at the footman who was dining so impudently in his stead, — "Monsieur, it is I who am your servant; I would like to know your name, in order to preserve it in my memory by the side of that of the good jailer who gave to Côme l'Ancien a proof of devotion like that which you give me. That incident is narrated in 'La Morale en Action,' Monsieur," continued Buvat, "and I take it upon myself to say to you that you are in all respects worthy of a place in that book."

"Monsieur," answered the valet, modestly, "I am called

Bourguignon, and this is my comrade Comtois, whose turn for devotion will come to-morrow, and who, when the moment shall have arrived, will not be behindhand. Comtois, my friend, a slice of that pheasant, and a glass of champagne. Do you not see that in order to reassure Monsieur completely, I must taste everything? It is a severe test, I know, but where would be the merit of being an honest man if it did not sometimes bring trials like the present? To your health, Monsieur Buvat!"

"Heaven preserve yours, Monsieur Bourguignon!"

"Now, Comtois, hand me the dessert, so that I may leave no doubt on Monsieur Buvat's mind."

"Monsieur Bourguignon, I beg you to believe that if I had any doubts, they are completely dissipated."

"No, Monsieur, no; I beg your pardon, you still have some. Comtois, my friend, now the hot coffee, very hot; I wish to drink it exactly as Monsieur would have desired it to be, and I presume it is thus that Monsieur likes it."

"Boiling, Monsieur, boiling," answered Buvat, bowing.

"Ah!" said Bourguignon, sipping his coffee, and raising his eyes ecstatically to the ceiling, "you are right, Monsieur. It is only so that coffee is good; cold, it is a very ordinary beverage. This, I may say, is excellent. Comtois, my friend, receive my compliments; you wait admirably. Now help me to take away the table. You know there is nothing more unpleasant than the smell of wines and viands to those who are not hungry or thirsty. Monsieur," continued Bourguignon, stepping toward the door, which he had kept carefully shut during the repast, and which he opened while his companion pushed forward the table, — "Monsieur, if you have need of anything, you have three bells, one at the head of your bed, and two at the mantel-piece. Those at the mantel-piece are for us, that at the bed for your *valet-de-chambre*."

"Thank you, Monsieur," said Buvat; "you are too good. I do not wish to disturb any one."

"Do not trouble yourself about that, Monsieur; Monseigneur desires that you should make yourself at home."

"Monseigneur is very polite."

"Does Monsieur require anything else?"

"Nothing more, my friend, nothing more," said Buvat, touched by so much devotion; "nothing except to express my gratitude."

"I have only done my duty, Monsieur," answered Bourguignon, modestly, bowing for the last time, and shutting the door.

"Upon my word!" said Buvat, following Bourguignon with his eyes, "it must be allowed that some proverbs are great liars. They say, 'As insolent as a lackey,' and yet here is an individual in the exercise of that calling who is politeness itself. I shall never believe in proverbs again, or rather, I shall make distinctions among them." And making himself this promise, Buvat found himself alone.

Nothing makes a man so hungry as the sight of a good dinner, of which the odor only comes to him. That which had just been eaten under the good man's very eyes surpassed in luxury everything that he had ever dreamed of, and he began — influenced by the decided calls of his stomach — to reproach himself for his too great distrust of his persecutors; but it was too late. Buvat, it is true, might have rung for Monsieur Bourguignon, or for Monsieur Comtois, and requested a second dinner; but he was of too timid a character for that, and the result was that he had to search his stock of proverbs for one the most consoling, and having found, between his situation and the proverb, "He who sleeps dines," an analogy which seemed to him most direct, he resolved to heed that

proverb, and as he could not dine, to endeavor at least to sleep.

But at the moment of taking this resolution, Buvat found himself assailed by new fears. Could they not profit by his sleep to despatch him? The night is the time of ambushes. He had often heard his mother tell of beds which, by the lowering of their canopies, smothered the unfortunate sleeper; of beds which sank through a trap so quietly as not to wake the occupant; finally, of secret doors opening in walls and even in furniture, to give entrance to assassins. This sumptuous dinner, these rich wines, — had they not been sent him to insure a sounder sleep? All this was possible, to say the least; and therefore Buvat, in whom the instinct of self-preservation was strongly developed, took his candle, and began a most minute investigation. After opening the doors of all the cupboards, pulling out all the drawers of the bureaus, and sounding all the panelling, Buvat had gone down on his hands and feet, and was stretching his head timidly under the bed, when he thought he heard steps behind him. His position was such that he was unable to act on the defensive; he therefore remained motionless, and waited with a beating heart. After a few seconds of solemn silence, —

"Pardon," said a voice which made Buvat tremble, "but is not Monsieur looking for his night-cap?"

Buvat was discovered; there was no way of escaping the danger, if danger there was. He therefore drew his head from under the bed, took his candle, and remaining on his knees, as in a humble and beseeching posture, he turned toward the individual who had just addressed him, and found himself face to face with a man dressed in black, and carrying, folded up on his arm, many articles which Buvat thought he recognized as things to wear.

"Yes, Monsieur," said he, seizing the opening which was offered to him with a presence of mind on which he secretly congratulated himself, "that is just what I am looking for; is that search forbidden?"

"Why did not Monsieur, instead of troubling himself, ring the bell? I have the honor to be appointed Monsieur's *valet-de-chambre*, and I have brought him a night-cap and night-shirt."

And with these words the *valet-de-chambre* spread out on the bed a night-shirt embroidered with flowers, a cap of the finest lawn, and a rose-colored ribbon. Buvat, still on his knees, regarded him with the greatest astonishment.

"Now," said the *valet-de-chambre*, "will Monsieur allow me to help him to undress?"

"No, Monsieur, no," said Buvat, whose modesty was easily alarmed, but accompanying the refusal with the sweetest smile he could assume. "No, I am accustomed to undress myself. I thank you, Monsieur."

The *valet-de-chambre* retired, and Buvat remained alone.

As the inspection of the room was completed, and as his increasing hunger rendered sleep more necessary, Buvat with a sigh began to undress, placed, in order not to be left in the dark, a candle on the corner of the chimney-piece, and sprang, with a groan, into the softest and warmest bed he had ever known.

But the bed does not insure sleep; and that is an axiom which Buvat might have added, from experience, to the list of his veracious proverbs. By reason either of his fears or of his hunger, Buvat passed a very disturbed night, and it was not till near morning that he fell asleep; even then his slumbers were visited by the most absurd and frightful nightmares. He had just dreamed of being poisoned by a leg of mutton, when the *valet-de-chambre* entered, and asked at what time he would like breakfast.

This question was so pertinent as a sequel to his dream that Buvat shuddered from head to foot at the idea of eating the least thing. He answered with a sort of suppressed groan, which doubtless seemed to the *valet-de-chambre* to have some meaning; for he immediately withdrew, saying that Monsieur was about to be served.

Buvat was not in the habit of breakfasting in bed, so he rose quickly and dressed in haste. He had just finished, when Messieurs Bourguignon and Comtois entered, bringing the breakfast, as the day before they had brought the dinner.

Then took place a repetition of the scene which we have before related, with the exception that now it was Monsieur Comtois who ate and Monsieur Bourguignon who waited; but when they came to the coffee, and Buvat, who had taken nothing for twenty-four hours, saw his dearly loved beverage, after having passed from the silver coffee-pot into the porcelain cup, pass into the mouth of Monsieur Comtois, he could hold out no longer, and declared that his stomach demanded to be amused with something, and that consequently he desired that they would leave him the coffee and a roll. This declaration appeared to disturb the devotion of Monsieur Comtois, who was nevertheless compelled to limit himself to a single cup of the odoriferous liquid, the remainder of which, together with a roll and the sugar, was placed on a little table, while the two scamps carried off the rest of the feast, laughing in their sleeves.

Scarcely was the door closed, when Buvat darted toward the little table, and without even waiting to dip one into the other, ate the bread and drank the coffee; then, a little comforted by that repast, insufficient as it was, he began to look at things in a less sinister light.

In truth, Buvat was not wanting in a certain good

sense, and as he had passed the preceding evening and night and entered on the present morning without interference, he began to understand that though for some political purpose his oppressors had deprived him of his liberty, they were far from wishing to shorten his days; that, on the contrary, they were bestowing upon him attentions of which he had never before been the object, — for in spite of himself, Buvat was susceptible to the seductive power of luxury, which insinuates itself through all the pores, and expands the heart. He had seen that the dinner of the day before was better than his ordinary dinner; that the bed was softer than his ordinary bed; that the coffee he had just drunk possessed an aroma which the mixture of chiccory took away from his; and he could not conceal from himself that the elastic couches and stuffed chairs which he had sat upon for the last twenty-four hours were much preferable to the hair sofa and cane chairs of his own establishment. The only thing, then, which remained to trouble him, was the uneasiness which Bathilde would feel at his not returning. He had for an instant the idea, not daring to renew the request which he had made to Dubois the day before, that he might send some message to his ward, of imitating the man with the iron mask, who had thrown a silver plate from the window of his prison to the shore, by throwing a letter from his balcony into the courtyard of the Palais Royal; but he knew what a fatal result this infraction of the will of Monsieur de Saint-Mars had had for the unfortunate prisoner, and he feared therefore that he might increase, by an act of that kind, the rigors of his captivity, which at present seemed to him tolerable.

The result of all these reflections was that Buvat got through the morning with much less agitation than he had experienced during the night and the preceding even-

ing. Moreover, his stomach, appeased by the coffee and the roll, imposed on him only that slight measure of appetite which when one is sure of a good dinner is but an additional source of pleasure. Add to all this the particularly cheerful view which the prisoner had from his window, and it will be easily understood that he passed the hours till one o'clock without an excess of grief or of ennui.

Exactly at one o'clock the door opened, and the table reappeared, ready laid, and brought, as on the day before and that morning, by the two valets. But this time it was neither Monsieur Bourguignon nor Monsieur Comtois who sat down to it. Buvat declared himself perfectly reassured concerning the intentions of his august host; he thanked Messieurs Comtois and Bourguignon for the devotion of which each in turn had given him a proof, and begged them to wait upon him in their turn. The two servants made wry faces, but obeyed.

It will be understood that the happy disposition in which Buvat now was became more beatific under the influence of a good dinner. Buvat ate from all the dishes, drank of all the wines, and at last, having slowly imbibed a cup of coffee, — a luxury in which he was wont to indulge only on Sundays, — and having swallowed on the top of the Arabian nectar a glass of Madame Anfoux's liqueur, he was, it must be confessed, in a state bordering upon ecstasy.

That evening the supper was equally successful; but as Buvat abandoned himself rather more freely than at dinner to the consumption of chambertin and sillery, about eight o'clock in the evening he found himself in a state of contentment impossible to describe. The consequence was that when the *valet-de-chambre* entered, instead of finding him, as on the evening before, on his hands and

knees, with his head under the bed, he found him seated in a comfortable armchair, his feet on the hobs, his head leaning back, his eyes winking, while he sang in a low tone and with an expression of infinite tenderness:

"Then let me go,
And let me play,
Beneath the hazel-tree."

These were obvious indications of a great improvement in the state of the worthy writer since the evening before. Moreover, when the *valet-de-chambre* offered to help him to undress, Buvat, who found a slight difficulty in expressing his thoughts, contented himself with smiling in sign of approbation; then he extended his arms to have his coat taken off, and then his legs to have his slippers removed. But in spite of his state of exaltation, it is only just to Buvat to say that his natural reserve did not permit a more complete abandonment, and it was only when he found himself alone that he laid aside the rest of his garments.

This time, contrary to what he had done the night before, he stretched himself out luxuriously in his bed, fell asleep in five minutes, and dreamed that he was the Grand Turk, and that, like King Solomon, he had three hundred wives and five hundred concubines. We hasten to say that this was the only dream of a somewhat too lively character that visited the modest Buvat in the course of his chaste life.

In the morning Buvat awoke as fresh as a rose, having only one trouble, — the thought of Bathilde's anxiety; otherwise he was perfectly happy.

It may easily be imagined that the breakfast did not lessen his good spirits. On the contrary, being informed that he might write to Monsieur the Archbishop of Cambrai, he asked for paper and ink, which were brought him, took

from his pocket his penknife, which never left him, cut his pen with the greatest care, and began, in his finest writing, a most touching request that if his captivity was to be prolonged, Bathilde might be sent for or at least that she might be informed that except his liberty he was in want of nothing, thanks to the kindness of Monseigneur the prime minister.

This request, to the caligraphy of which Buvat had devoted no little care, and whose capital letters represented different plants, trees, or animals, occupied the worthy writer from breakfast till dinner. On sitting down to table, he gave the note to Bourguignon, who charged himself with carrying it to the prime minister, saying that Comtois would wait during his absence. In a quarter of an hour Bourguignon returned, and informed Buvat that Monseigneur had gone out, but that in his absence the petition had been given to the person who aided him in his public affairs, and that person had requested that Monsieur Buvat would come and see him as soon as he had finished his dinner, but hoped that Monsieur would not in any degree hurry himself, since he who made the request was himself at dinner. In accordance with this permission, Buvat took his time, feasted on the best cookery, imbibed the most generous wines, sipped his coffee, played with his glass of liqueur, and then — the last operation completed — declared in a resolute tone that he was ready to appear before the substitute of the prime minister.

The sentinel had received orders to let him pass; and Buvat, conducted by Bourguignon, passed proudly by him. For some time they followed a long corridor, then descended a staircase; at last the footman opened a door and announced Monsieur Buvat.

Buvat found himself in a sort of laboratory, situated on the ground-floor, in the presence of a man from forty to

forty-two years old, who was entirely unknown to him, and who, in plain costume, was performing at a blazing furnace some chemical experiment, to which he appeared to attach great importance. This man, seeing Buvat, raised his head, and having looked at him curiously, "Monsieur," said he, "are you Jean Buvat?"

"At your service, Monsieur," answered Buvat, bowing.

"The request which you have just sent to the abbé is your handwriting?"

"My own, Monsieur."

"You have a very elegant handwriting, Monsieur."

Buvat bowed with a proudly modest smile.

"The abbé," continued the unknown, "has informed me, Monsieur, of the services which you have rendered us."

"Monseigneur is too good," murmured Buvat; "it was not worth the trouble."

"What! not worth the trouble? Indeed, Monsieur Buvat, it was, on the contrary, well worth the trouble; and to prove it, if you have any favor to ask from the regent, I will charge myself with the message."

"Monsieur," said Buvat, "since you are so good as to offer to interpret my sentiments to his royal Highness, have the kindness to request him, when he is less pressed, if it is not too inconvenient, to pay me my arrears."

"What! your arrears, Monsieur Buvat? What do you mean?"

"I mean, Monsieur, that I have the honor to be employed at the royal library, but that for six years they have told us, at the end of every month, that there was no money in the treasury."

"And what is the whole amount of your arrears?"

"Monsieur, I must have a pen and ink to calculate exactly."

"Oh, but something near the mark; calculate from memory."

"To five thousand three hundred and odd francs, besides the fractions in sous and deniers."

"And you wish for payment, Monsieur Buvat?"

"I do not deny it, Monsieur; it would give me great pleasure."

"And is this all you ask?"

"All."

"But do you not ask anything for the service which you have just rendered France?"

"Indeed, Monsieur, I should like permission to inform my ward Bathilde, who must be very anxious by reason of my absence, that she may be easy on my account, and that I am a prisoner at the Palais Royal. I would also ask — if it would not be imposing upon your kindness too much — that she might be allowed to pay me a little visit; but if this second request is indiscreet, I will confine myself to the first."

"We will do better than that, Monsieur Buvat. The causes for which you were retained exist no more, and we are going to set you at liberty; so you can go yourself to carry the news to Bathilde."

"What, Monsieur, what!" cried Buvat; "am I, then, no longer a prisoner?"

"You can go when you like."

"Monsieur, I am your very humble servant, and I have the honor of presenting you my respects."

"Pardon, Monsieur Buvat, one word more."

"Two, Monsieur."

"I repeat to you that France is under obligations to you, which she will acquit. Write, then, to the regent; inform him of what is due to you; show him your situation; and if you have a particular desire for anything,

say so boldly. I guarantee that he will grant your request."

"Monsieur, you are too good, and I shall not fail. I hope, then, that out of the first money which comes into the treasury — "

"You will be paid; I give you my word."

"Monsieur, this very day my petition shall be addressed to the regent."

"And to-morrow you will be paid."

"Ah, Monsieur, what goodness!"

"Go, Monsieur Buvat, go; your ward expects you."

"You are right, Monsieur; but she will lose nothing by having waited for me, since I bring her such good news. *Au revoir*, Monsieur. Ah! pardon; would it be an indiscretion to ask your name?"

"Monsieur Philippe!"

"*Au revoir*, Monsieur Philippe!"

"Adieu, Monsieur Buvat. One moment; I must give orders that they are to allow you to pass."

At these words he rang; an usher appeared.

"Send Ravanne."

The usher went out; a few seconds afterward a young officer of guards entered.

"Ravanne," said Monsieur Philippe, "conduct this gentleman to the gate of the Palais Royal. He is free to go where he wishes."

"Yes, Monseigneur," answered the young officer.

A cloud passed over Buvat's eyes; and he opened his mouth to ask who it was that was called "Monseigneur," but Ravanne did not leave him time.

"Come, Monsieur," said he; "I await you."

Buvat looked at Monsieur Philippe and the page with a stupefied air; but the latter, not understanding Buvat's

hesitation, again urged him to start. Buvat obeyed, drawing out his handkerchief, and wiping his forehead.

At the door the sentinel wished to stop Buvat.

"By the order of his royal Highness Monseigneur the Regent, Monsieur is free," said Ravanne.

The soldier presented arms, and allowed him to pass.

Buvat thought he should faint; he felt his legs fail him, and leaned against a wall.

"What is the matter, Monsieur?" asked his guide.

"Pardon, Monsieur," murmured Buvat; "but who is the person to whom I have just had the honor of speaking?"

"Monseigneur the Regent in person."

"Not possible!"

"Not only possible, but true."

"What! it was the regent himself who promised to pay me my arrears?"

"I don't know what he promised you; but I know that the person who gave me the order to accompany you was the regent."

"But he told me his name was Philippe."

"Well, it is, — Philippe d'Orléans."

"That is true, Monsieur, that is true; Philippe is his Christian name. The regent is a brave man, and when I remember that there are scoundrels who conspire against him, — against a man who has promised to pay me my arrears, — why, they deserve to be hanged, all of them; to be broken on the wheel, drawn and quartered, burned alive. Don't you think so, Monsieur?"

"Monsieur," said Ravanne, laughing, "I have no opinion on matters of such importance. We are at the gate; I should be happy to accompany you farther, but Monseigneur leaves in half an hour for the Abbey of Chelles, and as he has some orders to give me before his departure, I am — to my great regret — obliged to leave you."

"All the regret is on my side, Monsieur," said Buvat, graciously, and answering by a profound bow to the parting nod of the young man, who, when Buvat raised his head, had already disappeared. This departure left Buvat entirely free in his movements; and taking advantage of that fact, he pursued his way down the Place des Victoires toward the Rue du Temps-Perdu, round the corner of which he turned at the very moment when D'Harmental ran his sword through the body of Roquefinette. It was at this moment that poor Bathilde — who was far from suspecting what was taking place in her neighbor's room — had seen her guardian, and had rushed to meet him on the stairs, where Buvat and she had met on the third flight.

"Oh, little father, dear little father," cried Bathilde, remounting the staircase with her hand on Buvat's arm, and stopping to embrace him at every step, "where have you been? What has happened to you? How is it that we have not seen you since Monday? What uneasiness you have caused us, *mon Dieu!* But something extraordinary must have occurred!"

"Yes, most extraordinary," answered Buvat.

"Ah, *mon Dieu!* tell me about it, little father. In the first place, where do you come from?"

"From the Palais Royal."

"What! from the Palais Royal! and whose guest were you at the Palais Royal?"

"The regent's."

"You the regent's guest! and what were you doing there?"

"I was a prisoner."

"A prisoner! you?"

"A State prisoner."

"And why were you a prisoner?"

"Because I have saved France."

"Oh, *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* Little father, have you lost your wits?" cried Bathilde, terrified.

"No; but there has been enough to make me crazy, if I had not had a pretty strong head."

"But, I beg of you, explain yourself!"

"You must know, then, that there was a conspiracy against the regent."

"Oh, *mon Dieu!*"

"And that I was in it."

"You?"

"Yes, I, — without being in it, that is to say. You know that Prince de Listhnay?"

"Well?"

"A sham prince, my child, — a sham prince!"

"But the copies which you made for him?"

"Manifestoes, proclamations, incendiary papers, a general revolt, Brittany, Normandy, the States-General, King of Spain; and it is I who discovered all that."

"You?" cried Bathilde, horrified.

"Yes, I; and the regent has called me the savior of France, — me, — and is going to pay me my arrears."

"My father, my father, you talk of conspirators; do you remember the names of any of them?"

"First, Monsieur le Duc du Maine; fancy that miserable bastard conspiring against a man like Monseigneur the Regent! Then a Comte de Laval, a Marquis de Pompadour, a Baron de Valef, the Prince de Cellamare, the Abbé Brigaud, — that abominable Abbé Brigaud! Think of my having copied the list — "

"My father," said Bathilde, shuddering with fear, — "my father, among all those names, did you not see the name — the name — of the — Chevalier — Raoul d'Harmental?"

"That I did," cried Buvat; "the Chevalier Raoul D'Harmental? Why, he is the head of the conspiracy!

But the regent knows them all; this very evening they will all be arrested, and to-morrow hung, drawn, quartered, broken on the wheel."

"Oh, miserable, miserable that you are!" cried Bathilde, wringing her hands wildly; "you have killed the man whom I love! But I swear to you, by the memory of my mother, that if he dies, I will die also!"

And thinking that she might still be in time to warn D'Harmental of the danger which threatened him, Bathilde left Buvat confounded, darted to the door, flew down the staircase, cleared the street at two bounds, rushed up the stairs almost without touching the steps, and breathless, terrified, dying, hurled herself against the door of D'Harmental's room, which, badly closed by the chevalier, yielded before her, exposing to her view the body of the captain stretched on the floor, and swimming in a sea of blood.

At this sight, so widely different from what she expected, Bathilde, not thinking that she might perhaps be compromising her lover, sprang toward the door, calling for help; but on reaching the threshold, either because her strength failed her or because her foot slipped in the blood, she fell backward with a terrible cry.

On hearing that cry, the neighbors hastened thither, and found that Bathilde had fainted; her head had struck against the edge of the door, and she was badly wounded. They carried her to Madame Denis's room, and the good woman hastened to offer her hospitality.

As to Captain Roquefinette, as he had torn off, to light his pipe, the address of the letter which he had in his pocket, and as there was no other paper on his person indicating his name or residence, they carried his body to the Morgue, where, three days afterward, it was recognized by La Normande.

CHAPTER XLI.

GOD DISPOSES.

D'HARMENTAL, as we have seen, had set off at a gallop, feeling that he had not an instant to lose in bringing about the changes which the death of Captain Roquefinette rendered necessary in his hazardous enterprise. In the hope of recognizing by some sign the individuals who were designed to play the part of assistants in this great drama, he followed the boulevards as far as the Porte St. Martin, and having arrived there, turned to the left, and was in the midst of the horse-market. It was there, it will be remembered, that the twelve or fifteen sham peasants enlisted by Roquefinette waited the orders of their chief.

But as the unfortunate captain had said, there was no special token which could designate to the eye of a stranger those mysterious men, dressed as they were like all the rest, and scarcely known even to one another. D'Harmental therefore sought vainly; all the faces were unknown to him; buyers and sellers appeared equally indifferent to everything except the bargains which they were concluding. Twice or thrice, having approached persons whom he fancied he recognized as pretended bargainers, he went away without even speaking to them, so great was the probability that among the five or six hundred individuals who were on the ground, he would make some mistake which might be not only useless, but even dangerous.

The situation was pitiable. D'Harmental unquestionably had there, ready to his hand, all the means necessary to the successful accomplishment of his purpose; but in killing the captain, he had broken with his own hand the thread which should have served him as a clew to them, and the connecting link broken, the whole chain had become useless.

D'Harmental bit his lips till the blood came, and wandered to and fro from end to end of the market, still hoping that some unforeseen event would get him out of his difficulty. But time went on; the market presented the same aspect; no one spoke to him; and two peasants, to whom in his despair he had addressed a few ambiguous words, had opened their eyes and mouths in such profound astonishment that he had instantly broken off the conversation, convinced that he was mistaken.

Five o'clock struck. At eight or nine the regent would return from Chelles. There was therefore no time to be lost, particularly as this ambuscade was the last resource for the conspirators, who might be arrested at any moment, and who staked their remaining hopes on this last throw. D'Harmental did not conceal from himself the difficulties of the situation. He had claimed for himself the honor of the enterprise; on him therefore rested all the responsibility, and that responsibility was terrible. On the other hand, he found himself in one of those situations where courage is useless, where human will shatters itself against an impossibility, and where the last chance is to confess one's weakness, and ask aid from those who expect it of us. But D'Harmental was a man of determination; his resolution was soon formed. He took a last turn round the market to see if some conspirator would not betray himself by his impatience; but seeing that all faces retained their expression of unconcern, he put his

horse to a gallop, rode down the boulevards, gained the Faubourg St. Antoine, dismounted at No. 15, went up the staircase, opened the door of a little room, and found himself in the presence of Madame du Maine, Laval, Valef, Pompadour, Malezieux, and Brigaud. They all uttered cries of astonishment on seeing him.

D'Harmental related everything, — the demands of Roquefinette, the discussion which had followed, the duel which had terminated that discussion. He opened his cloak and showed his shirt saturated with blood ; then he passed to the hopes which he had entertained of recognizing the sham peasants, and putting himself at their head in place of the captain. He described the failure of his hopes and his futile investigations in the horse-market, and wound up by an appeal to Laval, Pompadour, and Valef, who answered that they were ready to follow the chevalier to the end of the earth, and to obey his orders.

Nothing was lost, then. Four resolute men, acting on their own account, were well worth twelve or fifteen hired vagabonds, who were not influenced by any motive beyond that of gaining each some hundred louis. The horses were ready in the stable ; every one had come armed. D'Avranches had not yet gone, so that the little troop was re-enforced by another devoted man. They sent for masks of black velvet, so as to hide from the regent as long as possible the faces of his abductors, left with Madame du Maine Malezieux and Brigaud, who were naturally excluded from such an expedition, — the former by his advanced age, and the latter by his profession, — appointed a rendezvous at St. Mandé, and went away, each one separately, so as not to arouse suspicions. An hour afterward the five friends were reunited, and ambushed on the road to Chelles, between Vincennes and Nogent-sur-Marne.

Half-past six struck on the château clock.

D'Avranches had been in search of information. The regent had passed at about half-past three. He had neither guards nor suite; he was in a carriage with four horses, managed by two jockeys, and was preceded by a single outrider. There was therefore no resistance to be feared. On arresting the prince, they would turn his course toward Charenton, where the post-master was, as we have said, devoted to the interest of Madame du Maine; they would take him into the courtyard, whose door would close upon him, and would force him to enter a travelling-carriage, which would be waiting with the postilion in his saddle. D'Harmental and Valef would seat themselves by him; they would start off at a rapid pace; they would cross the Marne at Alfort, the Seine at Villeneuve-St.-Georges, reach Grand-Vaux, then Monthéry, and find themselves on the road to Spain. If at any of the stations where they changed horses the regent endeavored to call out, D'Harmental and Valef would threaten him; and if he called out in spite of the menaces, they had that famous passport to prove that he who claimed assistance was not the prince, but only a madman who thought himself the regent, and whom they were conducting to his family, who lived at Saragossa. All this was a little dangerous, it is true; but as is well known, these are the very enterprises which succeed, the more easily because those against whom they are directed are not on guard against them.

Seven o'clock, eight o'clock, struck successively. D'Harmental and his companions saw with pleasure the night approaching, and the darkness falling more and more dense and black around them; two or three passing carriages, either of the post or of private owners, had already roused their expectations, and had put them on the alert in readiness for the real attack. At half-past eight the night was

pitch-dark, and a sort of natural fear, which the conspirators had felt at first, began to change into impatience.

At nine o'clock they thought they could distinguish sounds. D'Avranches lay down, with his ear to the ground, and distinctly heard the rolling of a carriage. At that instant they saw, at a distance of about a thousand paces, near a turn in the road, a point of light like a star. The conspirators trembled with excitement; it was evidently the outrider with his torch. There was soon no doubt; they saw the carriage with its two lanterns. D'Harmental, Pompadour, Valef, and Laval grasped one another's hands, put on their masks, and each one took the place assigned to him.

The carriage advanced rapidly; it was really that of the duke. By the light of the torch which he carried, they could distinguish the red dress of the outrider, some five and twenty paces before the horses. The road was silent and deserted; everything seemed to favor the conspirators. D'Harmental threw a last glance on his companions. D'Avranches was in the middle of the road, pretending to be drunk; Laval and Pompadour were at the sides of the path; and opposite him was Valef, who was cocking his pistols. As to the outrider, the two jockeys, and the prince, it was evident that they were all in a state of perfect security, and would fall quietly into the trap.

The carriage drew near; already the outrider had passed D'Harmental and Valef. Suddenly he struck against D'Avranches, who sprang up, seized the bridle, snatched the torch from his hand, and extinguished it. At this sight the jockeys tried to turn the carriage, but it was too late. Pompadour and Laval sprang upon them, pistol in hand, while D'Harmental and Valef presented themselves at the two doors, extinguished the lanterns, and intimated to the prince that if he did not make any resistance, his

life would be spared, but that if, on the contrary, he defended himself or cried out, they were determined to proceed to extremities.

Contrary to the expectation of D'Harmental and Valef, who knew the courage of the regent, the prince said only, "Well, gentlemen, do not harm me. I will go wherever you wish."

D'Harmental and Valef threw a glance along the road; they saw Pompadour and D'Avranches leading into the depth of the wood the outrider, the two jockeys, the outrider's horse, and two of the carriage horses, which they had unharnessed. The chevalier sprang from his horse and mounted that of the first postilion; Laval and Valef placed themselves at the doors; the carriage set off at a gallop, and taking the first turn to the left, began to roll, without noise and without light, in the direction of Charenton. All the arrangements had been so well made that the seizure had not occupied more than five minutes; no resistance had been made, and not a cry had been uttered. Most assuredly, this time fortune was on the side of the conspirators.

But having arrived at the end of the cross-road, D'Harmental encountered a first obstacle: the barrier, either by accident or design, was closed, and they were obliged to retrace their steps and take another road. The chevalier turned his horses, took a lateral alley, and the journey, interrupted for an instant, was resumed at an increased speed.

The new route which the chevalier had taken led him to a place where several roads met in an open square. One of the roads led straight to Charenton. There was no time to lose, and in any event he must cross this square. For an instant he thought he distinguished men in the darkness before him; but this vision disappeared like a mist, and the carriage continued its progress with-

out interruption. On approaching the square, D'Harmental fancied he heard the neighing of a horse, and a sort of ringing of iron, as when sabres are drawn from their sheaths; but taking it either for the wind among the leaves or for some other noise for which he need not stop, he continued with the same swiftness, the same silence, and in the midst of the same darkness.

But on arriving at the square made by the junction of the several roads, D'Harmental saw something strange,—a sort of wall closing all the roads that centred there; it was evident that something unexpected was taking place. D'Harmental stopped the carriage, and wished to go back on the road by which he had come; but a similar wall had closed behind him. At that instant he heard the voices of Laval and Valef crying, "We are surrounded! Save yourself!" And both left the doors, leaped their horses over the ditch, darted into the forest, and disappeared among the trees.

But it was impossible for D'Harmental, who was mounted on the postilion's horse, to follow his companions. Unable to escape the living wall which he recognized as formed by a body of musketeers, he tried to break through it, and with his head lowered, and a pistol in each hand, spurred his horse up the nearest road, without considering whether it was the right one. He had scarcely gone ten steps, however, when a musket-ball entered the head of his horse, which fell, entangling D'Harmental's leg. Instantly eight or ten cavaliers leaped from their horses and sprang upon him. He fired one pistol at random, and put the other to his head, to blow out his brains; but he had not time, for two musketeers seized him by the arms, and four others dragged him from beneath the horse. The pretended prince descended from the carriage, and turned out to be a valet in disguise;

they placed D'Harmental with two officers inside the carriage, and harnessed another horse in the place of the one which had been shot. The carriage once more moved forward, taking a new direction, and escorted by a squadron of musketeers. A quarter of an hour afterward it rolled over a drawbridge; a heavy door grated upon its hinges; and D'Harmental passed under a sombre and vaulted gateway, on the inner side of which an officer in the uniform of a colonel was waiting for him. It was Monsieur de Launay, the governor of the Bastille.

If our readers desire to know how the plot had been discovered, they must recall the conversation between Dubois and La Fillon. That companion of the prime minister, it will be remembered, suspected Roquefinette of being concerned in some unlawful enterprise, and had denounced him on condition of his life being spared. A few days afterward D'Harmental had come to her house, and she had recognized him as the young nobleman who had held the former conference with Roquefinette. She had consequently mounted the stairs behind him, and going into the next room, had heard everything through a hole bored in the partition.

What she had heard was the project for carrying off the regent on his return from Chelles. Dubois had been informed the same evening, and in order to take the conspirators in the act, had put a suit of the regent's clothes on Monsieur Bourguignon, and having surrounded the Bois de Vincennes with a regiment of Gray Musketeers, besides light-horse and dragoons, had produced the result we have just related. The head of the plot had been taken in the act; and as the prime minister knew the names of all the other conspirators, there was little chance remaining for them of escape from the meshes of the vast net which was hourly closing around them.

CHAPTER XLII.

A PRIME MINISTER'S MEMORY.

When Bathilde reopened her eyes, she found herself in Mademoiselle Émilie's room. Mirza was lying on the end of the bed; the two sisters were near her; and Buvat, overcome by grief, was sitting in a corner, his head bowed, and his hands resting on his knees.

At first all her thoughts were confused, and her sensation was one of bodily pain. She raised her hand to her head; the wound was behind the temple. A doctor, who had been called in, had arranged the first dressing, and left orders that he was to be sent for if fever declared itself.

Astonished to find herself, on waking from a sleep which had appeared to her heavy and painful, in bed in a strange room, the young girl turned an inquiring glance on each person present; but Émilie and Athénaïs shunned her eyes, and Buvat heaved a mournful sigh. Mirza alone stretched out her little head for a caress. Unluckily for the coaxing little creature, Bathilde began to recover her memory; the veil which was drawn before the late events rose little by little, and soon she began to connect the broken threads which would aid her to trace anew the course of past occurrences. She recalled the return of Buvat; what he had told her of the conspiracy; and the danger to which D'Harmental was exposed in consequence of the revelation which Buvat had made. Then she remembered her hope of being in time to save him, and

with what speed she had crossed the street and mounted the staircase; lastly, her entry into Raoul's room returned to her memory, and uttering a new cry of terror, as if she found herself again before the corpse of Roquefinette, "And he," she cried, "what has become of him?"

No one answered, for neither of the three persons who were in the room knew what reply to give; but Buvat, choking with tears, rose and went toward the door. Bathilde understood the grief and remorse expressed in that silent withdrawal; she stopped Buvat by a look, and extending her arms toward him, "Little father," said she, "do you no longer love your poor Bathilde?"

"I no longer love you, my darling child!" cried Buvat, falling on his knees, and kissing her hand, "I love you no longer! My God! it will be you who will not love me now; and you will be right, for I am a curse to you. I ought to have known that that young man loved you, and ought to have risked all, suffered all, rather than — But you told me nothing, you had no confidence in me, and I, with the best intentions in the world, only made blunders. Oh, wretch that I am! how can you ever forgive me? And if you do not forgive me, how shall I live?"

"Little father," cried Bathilde, "little father, try at least to find out what has become of him, I implore you."

"Well, my child, well; I will inquire. Will not you forgive me if I bring you good news? If the news is bad you will hate me even more, — that will be but just; but you will not die, Bathilde?"

"Go, go!" said Bathilde, throwing her arms round his neck, and giving him a kiss in which fifteen years of gratitude struggled with one day of pain. "Go; my life is in the hands of God. He only can decide whether I shall live or die."

Buvat understood nothing of all this but the kiss which he had received. It seemed to him that if Bathilde was very much offended with him she would not have kissed him; and half consoled, he took his hat and cane, and having inquired of Madame Denis how the chevalier had been dressed, he set out on his search in the direction which D'Harmental had taken.

It was no easy matter for a detective so simple as Buvat to trace Raoul's progress; he learned from a neighbor that he had been seen to spring upon a gray horse which had remained some half-hour fastened to the shutter, and that he had turned the corner of the Rue Gros-Chenet. A grocer, who lived at the corner of the Rue des Jeûneurs, remembered having seen a cavalier whose person and horse agreed perfectly with the description given by Buvat pass by at full gallop; and, lastly, a fruit-woman, who kept a little shop at the corner of the boulevards, swore positively that she had seen the man, and that he had disappeared by the Porte St. Denis. But from this point all the information was vague, unsatisfactory, and uncertain; so that after two hours of useless inquiry Buvat returned to Madame Denis's house without any more definite information to give Bathilde than that, wherever D'Harmental might have gone, he had passed along the Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle.

Buvat found his ward much agitated. During his absence she had grown rapidly worse, and the crisis foreseen by the doctor was fast approaching. Bathilde's eyes were burning; her skin seemed to glow; her utterances were nervously brief. Madame Denis had just sent for the doctor.

The poor woman was not without her own anxieties; for some time she had suspected that the Abbé Brigaud was involved in some plot, and what she had just learned—

that D'Harmental was not a poor student, but a handsome colonel — confirmed her conjectures, since it was Brigaud who had introduced him to her. This similarity between her own situation and that of the patient had not a little contributed to soften her heart, always kind, toward Bathilde. She listened, then, with eagerness to the little information which Buvat had been able to collect for the sufferer, and as it was far from being sufficiently positive to calm the patient, she promised, if she heard anything herself, to report it at once.

In the mean time the doctor arrived. Great as was his command over himself, it was easy to see that he thought Bathilde's condition serious. He bled her abundantly, ordered refreshing drinks, and advised that some one should watch at the bedside. Émilie and Athénaïs, who, aside from their little absurdities, were at heart excellent girls, declared directly that that was their business, and that they would pass the night with Bathilde alternately. Émilie, as the elder, claimed the first watch, which was accorded to her without contest. As to Buvat, since he could not remain in the chamber, and besides, his stifled sighs and heavy groans could only disturb the patient, they begged him to return home, which he consented to do only when Bathilde herself had entreated him.

The bleeding had somewhat calmed Bathilde, and she seemed to feel better. Madame Denis had left the room; Mademoiselle Athénaïs also had retired; Monsieur Boniface, after returning from the Morgue, where he had been to pay a visit to the body of Roquefinette, had gone up to his own room; and Émilie watched by the fireplace, and read a little book which she took from her pocket. Some one knocked on the street-door twice, in a manner which indicated a degree of agitation on the part of him who sought admission. Bathilde started, and raised herself on

her elbow. Émilie hurried her book into her pocket, and having heard Bathilde's movement, hastened to the bed. Then could be heard the opening and shutting of two or three doors; and before Émilie had time to say, "That is not the voice of Monsieur Raoul, it is the Abbé Brigaud," Bathilde had fallen back on her pillow.

An instant afterward Madame Denis half opened the door, and in a trembling voice called Émilie, who went out, leaving Bathilde alone.

Suddenly Bathilde was startled; the abbé was in the room next to hers, and she thought that she heard him pronounce Raoul's name. She now remembered having several times seen the abbé at D'Harmental's rooms; she knew that he was one of the most intimate friends of Madame du Maine. She thought, then, that the abbé must bring news of him. Her first idea was to slip from the bed, put on a dressing-gown, and go and ask what had happened; but she considered that if the news was bad, they would not tell it, and that it would be better to overhear the conversation, which seemed to be animated. Consequently she pressed her ear to the panel, and listened as if all her life were concentrated in the one sense of hearing.

Brigaud was relating to Madame Denis what had happened. Valef had made his way to the Faubourg St. Antoine, and given warning to Madame du Maine of the failure of the expedition. Madame du Maine had immediately freed the conspirators from their oaths, advised Malezieux and Brigaud to save themselves, and retired to the Arsenal. Brigaud came therefore to bid adieu to Madame Denis; he was going to attempt to reach Spain in the disguise of a pedler. In the midst of his recital, interrupted by the exclamations of poor Madame Denis and of Mademoiselle Athénaïs and Émilie, the abbé thought

that he heard a cry in the next room, just at the time when he was relating D'Harmental's catastrophe; but as no one had paid any attention to the cry, and as he was not aware that Bathilde was in that room, he had attached no importance to this noise, regarding the nature of which he might easily have been mistaken. Moreover, Boniface, summoned in his turn, had entered at the moment, and as the abbé had a particular fancy for Boniface, his entrance had naturally turned Brigaud's thoughts into a different channel.

Still, this was not the time for long leave-takings; Brigaud desired that daylight should find him as far as possible from Paris. He therefore took leave of the Denis family, and set out with Boniface, who declared that he would accompany his friend Brigaud as far as the barrier.

As they opened the staircase-door they heard the voice of the portress, who appeared to be opposing the passage of some one; they descended to discover the cause of the discussion, and found Bathilde, with streaming hair, naked feet, and wrapped in a long white robe, standing on the staircase, and endeavoring to go out in spite of the efforts of the portress. The poor girl had heard everything; her fever had changed into delirium. She would join Raoul; she would see him again; she would die with him.

The three women took her in their arms. For a minute she struggled against them, murmuring incoherent words; her cheeks were flushed with fever, while her limbs trembled, and her teeth chattered. But soon her strength failed her; her head sank back; and calling on the name of Raoul, she fainted a second time.

They sent once more for the doctor. What he had feared was now no longer doubtful, — brain fever had declared itself. At this moment some one knocked; it was Buvat, whom Brigaud and Boniface had found wan-

dering to and fro before the house like a ghost, and who, not able to contend any longer with his anxiety, had come to beg for a seat in some corner, he did not care where, so long as from time to time he had news of Bathilde. The poor family were too sad themselves not to feel for the grief of others. Madame signed to Buvat to seat himself in a corner, and retired into her own room with Athénaïs, leaving Émilie once more with the sufferer.

About daybreak Boniface returned. He had gone with Brigaud as far as the Barrière d'Enfer, where the abbé had left him, hoping — thanks to his good steed, and to his disguise — to reach the Spanish frontier.

Bathilde's delirium continued. All night she talked of Raoul; she often mentioned Buvat's name, and always accused him of having killed her lover. Buvat heard it, and without daring to defend himself, to reply, or even to groan, had silently burst into tears, seeking in his mind how to repair the evil he had wrought. At last, as day was breaking he seemed to have formed a decided resolution. He approached the bed, kissed the feverish hand of Bathilde, who looked at him without recognizing him, and went out.

Buvat had, in fact, determined on a bold course. It was to go himself to Dubois, tell him everything, and ask as his recompense, not the payment of his arrears, not advancement at the library, but pardon for D'Harmental. It was the least that could be accorded to the man whom the regent himself had called the savior of France. Buvat did not doubt that he should soon return bearing good news, and that the good news would restore Bathilde to health.

Consequently Buvat went home to repair the disorder of his dress, which had been disarranged by the events of the day and the emotions of the night; and, moreover, he

did not dare to present himself at the minister's house so early, for fear of disturbing him. His toilet finished, as it was still only nine o'clock, he visited for a few minutes Bathilde's room; it was that which the young girl had left the day before. Buvat sat down in the chair which she had occupied, touched the articles which she liked to touch, and kissed the feet of the crucifix which she kissed each night; one would have thought him a lover following the steps of his mistress.

Ten o'clock struck; it was the hour at which Buvat had often before repaired to the Palais Royal. The fear of being importunate gave place to the hope of being received as he had always been. He took his hat and cane, and called at Madame Denis's to ask how Bathilde had been during his absence; he found that she had never ceased to call for Raoul. The doctor had bled her for the third time. Buvat raised his eyes as if to call Heaven to witness that he was about to do all that he possibly could do to bring prompt relief to the sorrows of his ward, heaved a profound sigh, and set out for the Palais Royal.

The moment was badly chosen. Dubois, who had been constantly on his feet for four or five days, suffered horribly from the malady which was to cause his death in a few months; moreover, he was beyond measure annoyed that only D'Harmental had been taken, and had just given orders to Leblanc and D'Argenson to press on the trial with all possible speed, when his *valet-de-chambre*, who was accustomed to see the worthy writer arrive every morning, announced Monsieur Buvat.

"And who the devil is Monsieur Buvat?"

"It is I, Monseigneur," said the poor fellow, venturing to slip between the valet and the door, and bowing his honest head before the prime minister.

"Well, who are you?" asked Dubois, as if he had never seen him before.

"What, Monseigneur!" exclaimed the astonished Buvat; "do you not recognize me? I come to congratulate you on the discovery of the conspiracy."

"I get congratulations enough of that kind; thanks for yours, Monsieur Buvat," said Dubois, in a dry tone.

"But, Monseigneur, I come also to ask a favor."

"A favor! and on what grounds?"

"Why," said Buvat, stammering, — "why, Monseigneur, do you not remember that you promised me a — a recompense."

"A recompense! to you, you double idiot?"

"What, Monseigneur!" continued poor Buvat, getting more and more frightened, "do you not recollect that you told me here, in this very room, that I had my fortune at my fingers' ends?"

"And now," said Dubois, "I tell you that you have your life in your legs; for unless you decamp pretty quick —"

"But, Monseigneur —"

"Ah! you reason with me, scoundrel!" shouted Dubois, raising himself with one hand on the arm of his chair, and the other on his archbishop's crook. "Wait, then; you shall see —"

Buvat had seen quite enough. At the threatening gesture of the premier he understood what was to follow, and turning round, fled at full speed; but quick as he was, he had still time to hear Dubois, with the most horrible oaths and curses, order his valet to beat him to death if ever again he put his foot inside the door of the Palais Royal.

Buvat understood that there was no more hope in that direction, and that he must renounce not only the idea of being of service to D'Harmental, but also all hope of the

payment of his arrears, — a hope to which he had fondly clung. This chain of thought naturally reminded him that for eight days he had not been to the library. He was near there. He resolved to go to his office, if it was only to excuse himself to his superior, and relate to him the causes of his absence. But here a grief not less terrible than the rest was in store for Buvat: on opening the door of his office he saw his seat occupied; a stranger had been appointed to his place!

As he had never before — during the whole fifteen years — been an hour late, the curator had concluded he was dead, and had replaced him. Buvat had lost his situation for having saved France! This last stroke was more than he could bear, and he returned home almost as ill as Bathilde.

CHAPTER XLIII.

BONIFACE.

As we have seen, Dubois urged on the trial of D'Harmental, hoping that his revelations would furnish him with weapons against those whom he wished to attack; but D'Harmental persisted in a total denial with respect to others. As to what concerned himself personally, he confessed everything, saying that his attempt on the regent was an act of private revenge for the injustice which had been done him in depriving him of his regiment. As to the men who had accompanied him, and who had lent him their aid in the execution of his plans, he declared that they were two poor devils of peasants, who did not even know whom they were escorting. All this was not highly probable; but there was no way of eliciting from the examinations anything beyond the answers of the accused. The consequence was that to Dubois's great disappointment the real criminals escaped his vengeance, under cover of the persistent denials of the chevalier, who declared that he had seen Monsieur or Madame du Maine only once or twice in his life, and that he had never been trusted with any political mission by either of them.

Laval, Pompadour, and Valef had been arrested and taken to the Bastille, but they knew that they might rely upon the chevalier; and as the situation in which they found themselves had been foreseen, and it had been agreed what each should say, they all entirely denied any knowledge of the affair, — confessing associations with

Monsieur and Madame du Maine, but saying that those associations were confined to a respectful friendship. As to D'Harmental, they knew him, they said, for a man of honor, who complained of a great injustice which had been done to him. They were confronted, one after the other, with the chevalier; but these interviews had no other result than that of confirming each in his system of defence, and showing each that the system was religiously adhered to by his companions.

Dubois was furious. He reopened the proofs for the affair of the States-General; but that had been settled by the bed of justice, which had condemned the King of Spain's letters, and degraded the legitimated princes from their rank. Every one regarded them as sufficiently punished by this judgment, without being subjected to a second prosecution on the same grounds. Dubois had hoped, by the revelations of D'Harmental, to expose Monsieur and Madame du Maine to new charges more serious than the first; for this time it was a question of a direct attempt, if not on the life, at least on the liberty of the regent; but the obstinacy of the chevalier destroyed all his hopes. His anger had therefore turned solely on D'Harmental; and as we have said, he had ordered Leblanc and D'Argenson to expedite the prosecution, — an order which those two magistrates obeyed with their usual promptness.

During this time Bathilde's illness had progressed in such a manner that it had brought the poor girl to death's door; but at last youth and vigor had triumphed. To the excitement of delirium had succeeded a complete and utter prostration; one would have said that the fever alone had sustained her, and that in departing it had taken life along with it.

Still every day brought improvement, — slight, it is true, but quite apparent to the eyes of the good people

who surrounded the bed of sickness. Little by little Bathilde had recognized those who were about her; then she had stretched out her hand to them, and then spoken to them. As yet, to the astonishment of every one, Bathilde had not mentioned the name of D'Harmental; this was a great relief to those who watched her, for as they had none but sad news to give her about him, they preferred, as will easily be understood, that she should remain silent on the subject. Every one believed, and the doctor most of all, that the young girl had completely forgotten the past, or if she remembered it, that she confounded the reality with the dreams of her delirium. They were all wrong, even the doctor; this is what had occurred: —

One morning when they had thought Bathilde sleeping, and had left her alone for a minute, Boniface, who, in spite of Bathilde's severity, still preserved a great fund of tenderness toward her, half opened the door, as was his custom every morning since she had been ill, to ask news of her. The growling of Mirza aroused Bathilde, who turned round and saw Boniface. She immediately conceived the idea that she might learn from him that which she would ask in vain from the others, — namely, what had become of D'Harmental, — and therefore, while quieting Mirza, she extended her pale and emaciated hand to Boniface. Boniface took it between his own two great red hands; then, looking at the young girl, and shaking his head, —

"Yes, Mademoiselle Bathilde, yes," said he, "you were right; you are a lady, and I am only a coarse peasant. You deserved a nobleman, and it was impossible that you should love me."

"Not as you wished, it is true, Boniface," said Bathilde; "but I can love you in another manner."

"True, Mademoiselle Bathilde, very true. Well, love me as you will, so that you love me a little."

"I can love you as a brother."

"As a brother! You could love poor Boniface as a brother, and he might love you as a sister! He might sometimes hold your hand as he holds it now, and embrace you as he sometimes embraces Mélie and Naïs? Oh, speak, Mademoiselle Bathilde! What must I do for that?"

"My friend —" said Bathilde.

"She has called me her friend!" said Boniface; "she has called me her friend! — me, who have said such things about her. Listen, Mademoiselle Bathilde. Do not call me your friend; I am not worthy of the name. You do not know what I have said. I have said that you lived with an old man; but I did not believe it, Mademoiselle Bathilde, on my honor, I did not, — it was anger; it was rage. Mademoiselle Bathilde, call me beggar, rascal; it will give me less pain than to hear you term me your friend. Ah, you scoundrel Boniface!"

"My friend," continued Bathilde, "if you have said all that, I pardon you, for now you can not only repair that wrong, but also acquire lasting claims upon my gratitude."

"And what shall I do? Speak! Let me see! Must I go through the fire? Shall I jump out of the second-story window? Shall I — What shall I do? Tell me, no matter what it is!"

"No, no, my friend; something much easier than all that."

"Speak, Mademoiselle Bathilde, speak!"

"First, it is necessary that you should swear to do it."

"I swear by Heaven!"

"Whatever they may say to hinder you?"

"Hinder me from doing what you ask? Never!"

"Whatever may be the grief that it may cause me?"

"Ah, that is a different thing. If it is to give you pain, I would rather be cut in pieces."

"But if I beg you, my friend, my brother?" said Bathilde, in her most persuasive voice.

"Oh, if you speak like that, I shall cry like the Fountain of the Innocents!" And Boniface began to sob.

"You will tell me all, then, my dear Boniface?"

"Everything."

"Well, tell me first —" Bathilde stopped.

"What?"

"Can you not imagine, Boniface?"

"Yes, I think so. You want to know what has become of Monsieur Raoul, do you not?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Bathilde; "in Heaven's name, what has become of him?"

"Poor fellow!" murmured Boniface.

"*Mon Dieu!* is he dead?" exclaimed Bathilde, sitting up in the bed.

"No, happily not; but he is a prisoner."

"Where?"

"In the Bastille."

"I feared it," said Bathilde, sinking down in the bed; "in the Bastille! Oh, *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*"

"Oh, now, it is you who are crying, Mademoiselle Bathilde."

"And I am here in this bed, chained, dying!" cried Bathilde.

"Oh, do not cry like that, Mademoiselle; it is your poor Boniface who entreats you."

"No, I will be firm; I will have courage. See, Boniface, I weep no longer; but you understand," she continued, with increasing exc[illegible] for the fever gained on her,

"that I must know everything from hour to hour, so that when he dies I may die."

"You die, Mademoiselle Bathilde! never, never!"

"I have promised him I would; I have sworn it. Boniface, you will keep me informed of everything?"

"Oh, wretch that I am, what have I promised!"

"And if it must be at the moment, — the terrible moment, — you will aid me, you will conduct me, will you not, Boniface? I must see him again — once — once more — though it be on the scaffold."

"I will do all you desire, Mademoiselle," said Boniface, falling on his knees, and trying vainly to restrain his sobs.

"You promise me?"

"I swear it."

"Silence! some one is coming. Not a word of this; it is a secret between us two. Rise; wipe your eyes; do as I do, — smile." And Bathilde began to laugh with a feverish nervousness that was frightful to see. Fortunately, it was Buvat who came in; and Boniface profited by his entrance to depart.

"Well, how are you?" asked the good man.

"Better, little father, — much better; I feel my strength returning. In a few days I shall be able to rise. But you, little father, why do you not go to the office?" Buvat sighed deeply. "It was kind not to leave me when I was ill, but now that I am getting better, you must return to the library; do you hear, little father?"

"Yes, my child, yes," said Buvat, swallowing his sobs. "Yes, I am going."

"Are you going without kissing me?"

"No, my child, on the contrary."

"Why, here you are crying, and yet you see that I am better. Do you want me to die of grief?"

"I cry!" said Buvat, wiping his eyes with his handkerchief. "I crying! If I am crying, it is only for joy. Yes, I am going, my child, — to my office; I am going."

And Buvat, after having embraced Bathilde, returned home, — for he would not tell his poor child that he had lost his place, — and the young girl was left alone.

Then she breathed more freely; her mind was at rest. Boniface, in his capacity as clerk to an attorney at Châtelet, was in the very position that would enable him to hear of whatever might happen, and she was sure that he would tell her everything. In fact, on the next day she learned that Raoul had been interrogated, and that he had claimed to be solely accountable for all that had occurred. The day following she learned that he had been confronted with Laval, Valef, and Pompadour, but that the examination had led to no disclosures. Faithful to his promise, Boniface every evening brought her the day's news; and every evening Bathilde, at this recital, however alarming it might be, felt a renewal of her strength. A fortnight passed thus, at the end of which time Bathilde began to get up and walk a little about the room, to the great joy of Buvat, Nanette, and the whole Denis family.

One day Boniface, contrary to his custom, returned home from Joullu's at three o'clock and entered the room of the sufferer. The poor boy was so pale and so cast down that Bathilde understood that he brought some terrible information; and uttering a cry, she rose upright, with her eyes fixed on him. "All is finished, then?" she said.

"Alas!" answered Boniface, "it is all through his own obstinacy. They offered him his pardon, — do you understand, Mademoiselle Bathilde? — his pardon, if he would — and he would not speak a word.

"Then," cried Bathilde, "no more hope; he is condemned."

"This morning, Mademoiselle Bathilde, this morning."

"To death?"

Boniface bowed his head.

"And when is he to be executed?"

"To-morrow morning, at eight o'clock."

"Very well," said Bathilde.

"But perhaps there is still hope," said Boniface.

"What hope?" asked Bathilde.

"If even now he would denounce his accomplices."

The young girl began to laugh, but so strangely that Boniface shuddered from head to foot.

"Well," said Boniface, "who knows? I, if I were in his place, for example, should not fail to do so. I should say, 'It was not I, — on my honor, it was not I; it was such a one, and such another, and so on.'"

"Boniface, I must go out."

"You, Mademoiselle Bathilde!" cried Boniface, terrified. "You go out! why, it would kill you."

"I say I must go out."

"But you cannot stand upright."

"You are wrong, Boniface; I am strong. See!" And Bathilde began to walk up and down the room with a firm step.

"Moreover," added Bathilde, "you will go and get me a carriage."

"But, Mademoiselle Bathilde — "

"Boniface," said the young girl, "you have promised to obey me. Till this minute you have kept your word; are you getting lax in your devotion?"

"I, Mademoiselle Bathilde! I lax in my devotion to you? You ask for a carriage; I will bring two."

"Go, my friend, my brother," said Bathilde.

"Oh, Mademoiselle Bathilde, with such words you can make me do everything you wish. In five minutes the carriage will be here." And Boniface ran out.

Bathilde had on a loose white robe; she tied it in with a girdle, threw a cloak over her shoulders, and got ready. As she was advancing to the door, Madame Denis entered.

"Oh, my dear child, what in Heaven's name are you going to do?"

"Madame," said Bathilde, "it is necessary that I should go out."

"Go out! you are mad!"

"No, Madame," said Bathilde, with a sad smile, "I am in perfect possession of my senses; but you would drive me mad by retaining me."

"But at least tell me where you are going, my dear child."

"Do you not know that he is condemned, Madame?"

"Oh, *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* who told you that? I had asked every one to keep from you that horrible news."

"Yes, and to-morrow you would have told me that he was dead. And I should have answered, 'You have killed him, for I had a means of saving him perhaps.'"

"You, you, my child! you have a means of saving him?"

"I said perhaps, Madame. Let me try that means; it is the only one remaining."

"Go, my child," said Madame Denis, struck by the inspired tone of Bathilde's voice; "go, and may God guide you!"

Bathilde went out, descended the staircase with a slow but firm step, crossed the street, ascended the four stories without resting, and opened the door of her room, which she had not entered since the day of the catastrophe. At the noise which she made, Nanette came out of the inner

room, and uttered a cry; she thought she saw the ghost of her young mistress.

"Well," asked Bathilde, in a grave tone, "what is it, my good Nanette?"

"Oh, *mon Dieu!*" cried the poor woman, trembling, "is that really you, or is it your spirit?"

"It is I, Nanette, — myself; touch me, kiss me. Thank God, I am not yet dead."

"And why have you left Madame Denis's house? Have they said anything to wound you?"

"No, Nanette; but I have something to do which is necessary, indispensable."

"You go out in your present state! you will kill yourself! Monsieur Buvat! Monsieur Buvat! here is our young lady going out; come and tell her that it must not be."

Bathilde turned toward Buvat with the intention of employing her ascendency over him, if he endeavored to stop her; but she saw him with so sorrowful a face that she did not doubt that he knew the fatal news. On his part, Buvat burst into tears on seeing her.

"My father," said Bathilde, "what has been done to-day has been the work of men; what remains is in the hands of God, and He will have pity on us."

"Oh!" cried Buvat, sinking into a chair, "it is I who have killed him! it is I who have killed him!"

Bathilde went up to him solemnly and kissed him on his forehead.

"But what are you going to do, my child?"

"My duty," answered Bathilde.

She opened a little cupboard in the *prie-Dieu*, took out a black pocket-book, opened it, and drew out a letter.

"Oh, you are right! you are right, my child! I had forgotten that letter."

"I have remembered it," answered Bathilde, kissing

the letter, and placing it next her heart, "for it was the sole inheritance my mother left me."

At that moment they heard the noise of a carriage at the door.

"Adieu, father! adieu, Nanette!" said Bathilde. "Pray for my success." And she went away with a solemn gravity which made her, in the eyes of those who watched her, seem to be like a saint.

At the door she found Boniface waiting with the carriage.

"Shall I go with you, Mademoiselle Bathilde?" he asked.

"No, no, my friend," said Bathilde, "not now; to-morrow, perhaps."

She entered the carriage.

"Where to?" asked the coachman.

"To the Arsenal."

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE THREE VISITS.

On arriving at the Arsenal, Bathilde asked for Mademoiselle de Launay, who, at her request, led her at once to Madame du Maine.

"Ah, it is you, my child!" said the duchess, with a distracted air and voice; "it is well to remember one's friends when they are in misfortune."

"Alas, Madame!" replied Bathilde, "I come to your royal Highness to speak of one still more unfortunate. Doubtless your royal Highness has lost some of your titles, some of your dignities; but at that point vengeance will stop, for no one would dare to attack the life, or even the liberty, of the son of Louis XIV. or the granddaughter of the great Condé."

"The life, no; but the liberty, I will not answer for it. Do you know that that idiot of an Abbé Brigaud has got himself arrested three days ago at Orléans, dressed as a pedler, and — on false revelations, which they represented to him as coming from me — has confessed all and compromised us terribly, so that I should not be astonished at being arrested this very day?"

"He for whom I come to implore your pity, Madame, has revealed nothing, but, on the contrary, is condemned to death for having kept silence."

"Ah, my dear child," cried the duchess, "you speak of poor D'Harmental; he is a noble-hearted man. You know him, then?"

"Alas!" said Mademoiselle de Launay, "Bathilde not only knows him, but she loves him."

"Poor child! but what can I do? You see clearly that I can do nothing; I have no influence. For me to attempt anything in his favor would be to take away from him the last hope remaining."

"I know it, Madame," said Bathilde, "and I ask of your Highness but one thing; it is that through some of your friends or acquaintances I may gain admission to Monseigneur the Regent. The rest lies with me."

"My child, do you know what you are asking?" inquired the duchess. "Do you know that the regent respects no one? Do you know that you are beautiful as an angel, and that your paleness gives you a ravishing attractiveness? Do you know —"

"Madame," said Bathilde, with a lofty dignity, "I know that my father saved his life, and died in his service."

"Ah, that! that is another thing," said the duchess. "Wait; let me see, — what is it best to do? Yes, that is it; De Launay, call Malezieux."

Mademoiselle de Launay obeyed; and a moment afterward the faithful chancellor entered.

"Malezieux," said the duchess, "you must take this child to the Duchesse de Berri, with a recommendation from me. She must see the regent, and at once, you understand; the life of a man depends upon it, — it is that of D'Harmental, whom I would myself give so much to save."

"I go, Madame," said Malezieux.

"You see, my child," said the duchess, "I do all I can for you; if I can be useful to you in any other way, — if to prepare his flight or to seduce a jailer, money is needed, — I have still some diamonds, which cannot be better em-

ployed than in saving the life of so brave a gentleman. Come, lose no time. Kiss me, and go at once to my niece; you know that she is her father's favorite."

"I know, Madame," said Bathilde, "that you are an angel; and if I succeed, I shall owe you more than my life."

"Poor thing!" said the duchess, looking at Bathilde as she went away. Then, when Bathilde was out of sight, "Come, De Launay," continued Madame du Maine, who in fact was expecting every moment to be arrested, "let us return to our trunks."

Bathilde, accompanied by Malezieux, arrived at the Luxembourg in twenty minutes, and thanks to the influence of Malezieux, she was admitted without difficulty. She was conducted into a little boudoir, where she was requested to wait while the chancellor should see her royal Highness, and inform her of the favor they came to ask.

Malezieux acquitted himself of the commission with all the zeal he carried into affairs committed to him by Madame du Maine, and Bathilde had not waited ten minutes when she saw him return with the Duchesse de Berri. The duchess had an excellent heart, and she had been greatly moved by Malezieux's recital; so that when she appeared, there was no mistaking the interest she already felt in the young girl who came to solicit her protection. Bathilde came to her, and would have fallen at her feet, but the duchess took her by the hand, and kissing her on the forehead, —

"My poor child," said she, "why did you not come to me a week ago?"

"And why a week ago rather than to-day, Madame?" asked Bathilde, with anxiety.

"Because a week ago I should have yielded to none the

pleasure of taking you to my father; but that now is impossible."

"Impossible! Oh, *mon Dieu!* And why?" cried Bathilde.

"Do you not know that I am in complete disgrace since the day before yesterday? Alas! princess as I am, I am a woman like you, and like you I have had the misfortune to love. We daughters of the royal race, you know, have hearts that are not our own; they are jewels that constitute a portion of the treasure of the crown, and it is a crime to dispose of them without the authority of the king and his ministers. I have disposed of my heart, and I have nothing to say, for I was pardoned; but I disposed of my hand, and I am punished. For three days my lover has been my husband. See, what a strange thing! They make a crime of what in any one else would have been praised. My father himself is angry with me, and for three days, — that is to say, from the moment when I could present myself before him without good reason for shame, — I am forbidden his presence. Yesterday my guard was taken from me; this morning I presented myself at the Palais Royal and was refused admittance."

"Alas!" said Bathilde, "I am very unfortunate, for I had no hope but in you, Madame, and I know no one who can introduce me to Monseigneur the Regent. And it is to-morrow, Madame, at eight o'clock, that they will kill him whom I love as you love Monsieur de Riom. Oh, Madame, take pity on me, for if you do not, I am lost!"

"*Mon Dieu!* Riom, come to our aid," said the duchess, turning to her husband, who entered at this moment. "Here is a poor child who wants to see my father without delay; her life depends on the interview. Her life!

What am I saying? More than her life, — the life of the man she loves. Lauzun's nephew should never be at a loss; find us some course to take, and if it be possible, I will love you more than ever."

"I have found one," said Riom, smiling.

"Oh, Monsieur," cried Bathilde, "tell it to me, and I will be eternally grateful."

"Come, speak!" said the Duchesse de Berri, in a voice almost as eager as Bathilde's.

"But it compromises your sister singularly."

"Which one?"

"Mademoiselle de Valois."

"Aglaé! how so?"

"Do you not know that there exists a kind of sorcerer who has the power of appearing before her day or night, no one knows how?"

"Richelieu? It is true!" cried the Duchesse de Berri; "Richelieu can help us. But —"

"But what, Madame?"

"He will not, perhaps."

"Oh, I will implore him so earnestly that he will take pity on me," said Bathilde. "Besides, you will speak a word for me, will you not? He will not dare to refuse what your Highness asks."

"We will do better than that," said the duchess. "Riom, call Madame de Mouchy; beg her to take Mademoiselle herself to the duke. Madame de Mouchy is my first lady of honor, my child," continued the duchess, turning to Bathilde as Riom went out; "and it is supposed that the Duc de Richelieu owes her some gratitude. You see I could not choose you a better introductress."

"Oh, thanks, Madame!" cried Bathilde, kissing the duchess's hands; "you are right, and all hope is not yet

lost. And you say that the Duc de Richelieu is able to gain admission to the Palais Royal?"

"Stay! let us understand each other. I do not say so; report says so."

"Oh," cried Bathilde, "if we only find him at home!"

"Yes, that indeed is uncertain; but yet, let me see,—what time is it? Scarcely eight o'clock. He will probably sup in town, and return to dress. I will tell Madame de Mouchy to wait for him with you. Will you not," said she, turning to the lady of honor, who now entered, "wait for the duke till he returns?"

"I will do whatever your Highness orders," said Madame de Mouchy.

"Well, I order you to obtain from the Duc de Richelieu a promise that Mademoiselle shall see the regent, and I authorize you to use for this purpose whatever influence you may possess over him."

"Madame goes a long way," said Madame de Mouchy, smiling.

"Go, go!" said the duchess; "and do what I tell you. I assume all the responsibility. And you, my child, be brave! Go with Madame; and if you hear bad things said of that poor Duchesse de Berri, whom they hate so much because one day she received the ambassadors on a throne three steps from the floor, and because at another time she went through the streets of Paris attended by four trumpeters, say to those who anathematize me that at heart I am a good woman, and that in spite of all these anathemas I hope that much will be forgiven me, because I have loved much. Is it not so, Riom?"

"Oh, Madame!" cried Bathilde, "I don't know whether good things or bad are said of you, but I know that to me you seem so good and great that I could kiss your footsteps."

"Go, my child, go; if you miss Monsieur de Richelieu, you may not know where to find him, and you will perhaps wait for him in vain."

"Since her Highness permits it, come, then, quick, Madame," said Bathilde, "for every minute seems to me an age."

A quarter of an hour afterward Bathilde and Madame de Mouchy were at Richelieu's hotel. Contrary to all expectation, he was at home. Madame de Mouchy entered at once, followed by Bathilde. They found Richelieu occupied with Raffé, his secretary, in burning a number of useless letters, and putting others in order.

"Eh, *bon Dieu*, Madame!" said Richelieu, coming forward with a smile on his lips, "what good wind blows you here? And to what event do I owe the happiness of receiving you at my house at half-past eight in the evening?"

"To my wish to enable you to do a good action, Duke."

"Ah, really? In that case, make haste, Madame."

"Do you leave Paris this evening?"

"No; but I am going to-morrow morning, — to the Bastille."

"What joke is this?"

"I assure you it is no joke at all to leave my hotel, where I am very comfortable, for that of the king, where I shall be just the reverse. I know it, for this will be my third visit."

"But what makes you think you will be arrested to-morrow?"

"I have been warned."

"By a sure person?"

"Judge for yourself." And he handed a letter to Madame de Mouchy, who took it and read, —

"Innocent or guilty, you have only time to fly. The regent has just said aloud before me that he has caught the Duc de Richelieu at last. To-morrow you will be arrested."

"Do you think the person in a position to be well informed?" asked the duke.

"Yes, for I think I recognize the writing."

"You see, then, that I was right in telling you to make haste. Now, if it is a thing which may be done in the space of a night, speak; I am at your orders."

"An hour will suffice."

"Tell me, then; you know, Madame, that I can refuse you nothing."

"Well," said Madame de Mouchy, "the thing is told in a few words. Do you intend this evening to go and thank the person who gave you this advice?"

"Perhaps," said the duke, laughing.

"Well, you must present Mademoiselle to her."

"Mademoiselle!" cried the duke, astonished, and turning toward Bathilde, who till then had remained in the background, and partially concealed in the obscurity; "and who is Mademoiselle?"

"A young girl who loves the Chevalier d'Harmental, — who is to be executed to-morrow, as you know, and whose pardon she wishes to ask from the regent."

"You love the Chevalier d'Harmental, Mademoiselle?" said the duke, addressing Bathilde.

"Oh, Monsieur!" stammered Bathilde, blushing.

"Do not conceal it, Mademoiselle. He is a noble young man, and I would give ten years of my own life to save him. And do you think you have any means of interesting the regent in his favor?"

"I believe so."

"Good! I only hope it may be so. Madame," continued the duke, turning to Madame de Mouchy, "return

to her royal Highness, and tell her from me that Mademoiselle shall see the regent in an hour."

"Oh, Monsieur le Duc!" cried Bathilde.

"Decidedly, my dear Richelieu," said Madame de Mouchy, "I begin to believe what is said of you,— that you have made a compact with the Devil, and can pass through key-holes; and I confess I shall be less uneasy now in seeing you go to the Bastille."

"At any rate, you know, Madame, that charity teaches us to visit prisoners; and if you retain any recollection of poor Armand —"

"Silence, Duke! Be discreet, and we will see what can be done for you. Meanwhile, you promise that Mademoiselle shall see the regent?"

"It is a settled thing."

"In that case, adieu, Duke; and may the Bastille be made comfortable to you!"

"Is it adieu you say?"

"*Au revoir!*"

"That is better;" and having kissed Madame de Mouchy's hand, Richelieu led her to the door. Then, returning to Bathilde, —

"Mademoiselle," said he, "what I am about to do for you compromises the reputation and honor of a princess of the blood; but the gravity of the occasion demands some sacrifice. Swear to me, then, that you will never tell but to one person, — for I know there are persons for whom one has no secrets, — swear that you will never speak of what you are about to see, and that no one — excepting *him* — shall know in what manner you gained admission to the regent."

"Oh, Monsieur le Duc, I swear it by all I hold most sacred in the world, — by my mother's memory!"

"That will suffice," said the duke, ringing a bell. A *valet-de-chambre* entered.

"Lafosse," said the duke, "the bay horses and the carriage without arms."

"Monsieur le Duc," said Bathilde, "if you would save time, I have a hired carriage below."

"Very well; that is still better. I am at your orders, Mademoiselle."

"Am I to go with Monsieur le Duc?" asked the servant.

"No; stay and help Raffé to put these papers in order. There are several which it is quite unnecessary for Dubois to see."

And the duke offered his arm to Bathilde, went down with her, handed her into the carriage, and after telling the coachman to stop at the corner of the Rue St. Honoré and the Rue de Richelieu, placed himself by her side, as unconcerned in his demeanor as if he was not aware that the fate from which he was attempting to deliver the chevalier might be his own within a fortnight.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE CLOSET.

THE carriage stopped at its destination, and Richelieu, getting out and assisting Bathilde to alight, took a key from his pocket, and opened the door of a house at the corner of the Rue de Richelieu.

"I must ask your pardon, Mademoiselle," said he, offering his arm to Bathilde, "for leading you by badly lighted staircases and passages; but I am anxious not to be recognized, should any one meet me here. We have not far to go."

When he had ascended about twenty steps, he stopped, drew a second key from his pocket and opened a door, then entered an antechamber, and taking a candle, went back to light it by the lamp on the staircase.

"Once again I must ask pardon, Mademoiselle," said the duke; "but you will soon understand why I prefer to dispense with a servant here."

It mattered little to Bathilde whether the duke had a servant or not; she entered the antechamber without replying, and the duke locked the door behind her.

"Now follow me," said Richelieu; and he walked before the young girl, lighting her with the candle which he held in his hand. They crossed a dining-room and drawing-room, then entered a bedroom, where the duke stopped.

"Mademoiselle," said he, placing the candle on the chimney-piece, "I have your word that you will reveal nothing of what you are about to see?"

"I have given you my promise, Monsieur le Duc, and I now renew it. Oh, I should be ungrateful indeed if I should fail to keep it."

"Well, then, be the third in our secret. It is a secret of love; we put it under the safeguard of love."

The Duc de Richelieu, sliding away a panel in the woodwork, disclosed an opening in the wall, beyond which was the back of a closet, on which he knocked softly three times. Presently they heard a key turn in the lock, and saw a light between the boards; then a low voice asked, "Is it you?" On the duke's replying in the affirmative, three of the boards were quietly detached, the opening thus made affording a means of communication from one room to the other; and the duke and Bathilde found themselves in the presence of Mademoiselle de Valois, who uttered a cry on seeing her lover accompanied by a woman.

"Fear nothing, dear Aglaé," said the duke, passing into the room where she was, and taking her hand, while Bathilde remained motionless in her place, not daring to move a step till her presence was explained. "You will presently thank me for having betrayed the secret of our blessed closet."

"But, Monsieur le Duc, will you tell me—" began Mademoiselle de Valois, pausing after these interrogative words and looking at Bathilde uneasily.

"This very instant, very beautiful Princess. You have heard me speak of the Chevalier d'Harmental, have you not?"

"The day before yesterday you told me that by a word he might save his own life and compromise you all, but that he would not speak that word."

"Well, he has not spoken; and he is condemned to death, and is to be executed to-morrow. This young girl

loves him, and his pardon depends on the regent. Do you understand?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" said Mademoiselle de Valois.

"Come, Mademoiselle," said the duke to Bathilde, taking her by the hand; then, turning again to the princess, "She did not know how to reach your father, my dear Aglaé, and came to me just as I had received your letter. I had to thank you for the good advice you gave me; and as I know your heart, I thought I should please you by showing my gratitude in offering you an opportunity to save the life of a man to whose silence you probably owe my own."

"And you were right, my dear Duke. You are welcome, Mademoiselle. What can I do for you?"

"I wish to see Monseigneur the Regent," said Bathilde, "and your Highness can take me to him."

"Will you wait for me, Duke?" asked Mademoiselle de Valois, uneasily.

"Can you doubt it?"

"Then go into the closet, lest any one should surprise you here. I will take Mademoiselle to my father, and return immediately."

"I will wait," said the duke, following the instructions of the princess and entering the closet. Mademoiselle de Valois exchanged a few whispered words with her lover, locked the closet, put the key in her pocket, and holding out her hand to Bathilde, —

"Mademoiselle," said she, "all women who love are sisters. Armand and you did well to rely upon me; come."

Bathilde kissed the hand the princess offered, and followed her. They passed through all the rooms facing the square of the Palais Royal, and then, turning to the left, entered those which looked on the Rue de Valois, among which was the regent's bedroom.

"We have arrived," said Mademoiselle de Valois, stopping before a door, and turning to Bathilde, who, on receiving this information, trembled and turned pale; for all the moral force which had sustained her for the last three or four hours was ready to disappear just when she needed it the most.

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* I shall never dare to speak," said Bathilde.

"Courage, Mademoiselle! my father is kind. Enter; fall at his feet; God and his own heart will do the rest."

At these words, seeing that the young girl still hesitated, she opened the door, pushed Bathilde in, and closed it behind her. She then ran down with a light step to rejoin Richelieu, leaving Bathilde to plead her cause alone with the regent.

At this unforeseen action Bathilde uttered a low cry; and the regent, who was walking to and fro with his head bent down, raised his head, and turned around. Bathilde, incapable of making a step in advance, fell on her knees, drew out her letter, and held it toward the regent.

The regent's sight was imperfect; he did not see clearly what was taking place, and advanced toward this woman, who appeared to him in the shade as a white and indistinct form. Immediately, in that form, at first unknown, he recognized a woman, and in that form of a woman, a young girl beautiful and in a suppliant attitude.

As to the poor child, in vain she attempted to articulate a prayer. Voice and strength failing her together, she would have fallen if the regent had not supported her in his arms.

"*Mon Dieu!* Mademoiselle," said the regent, on whom the signs of grief produced their ordinary effect, "what is the matter? What can I do for you? Come to this armchair, I entreat you."

"No, Monseigneur, it is at your feet that I should be, for I come to ask a boon."

"And what is it?"

"See first who I am, Monseigneur, and then I may dare to speak;" and she held out the letter, on which rested her only hope, to the Duc d'Orléans.

The regent took the letter, and by the light of a candle which burned on the chimney-piece recognized his own writing, and read as follows: —

MADAME, — Your husband has died for France and for me. Neither France nor I can give you back your husband; but remember that if ever you are in want of anything we are both your debtors. Your affectionate

PHILIPPE D'ORLÉANS.

"I recognize this letter perfectly as my own," said the regent; "but to the shame of my memory I must confess that I do not know to whom it was written."

"Look at the address, Monseigneur," said Bathilde, a little reassured by the expression of benevolence on the duke's face.

"Clarice du Rocher!" cried the regent. "Yes, indeed, I remember now; I wrote this letter from Spain after the death of Albert, who was killed at the battle of Almanza. I wrote this letter to his widow. How did it fall into your hands, Mademoiselle?"

"Alas, Monseigneur, I am the daughter of Albert and Clarice."

"You, Mademoiselle? And what has become of your mother?"

"She is dead, Monseigneur."

"Long since?"

"Nearly fourteen years."

"But happy, doubtless, and wanting nothing?"

"In despair, Monseigneur, and wanting everything."

"But why did she not apply to me?"

"Your Highness was still in Spain."

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* what do you say? Continue, Mademoiselle, for you cannot imagine how much you interest me. Poor Clarice, poor Albert! They loved each other so much, I remember. She could not survive him. Do you know that your father saved my life at Nerwinden, Mademoiselle?"

"Yes, Monseigneur, I know it; and that gave me courage to present myself before you."

"But you, poor child, poor orphan, what became of you?"

"I, Monseigneur, was taken by a friend of our family, a poor writer called Jean Buvat."

"Jean Buvat!" cried the regent, "wait! I know that name. Jean Buvat! Why, that is the poor devil of a copyist who discovered the whole conspiracy, and who some days ago made his demands in person. A place in the library, was it not, — some arrears due?"

"The same, Monseigneur."

"Mademoiselle," replied the regent, "it appears that those who surround you are destined to save me. I am thus twice your debtor. You said you had a boon to ask of me. Speak boldly; I listen to you."

"Oh, my God," murmured Bathilde, "give me strength!"

"Is it, then, a very important and difficult thing that you desire?"

"Monseigneur," said Bathilde, "it is the life of a man who has deserved death."

"Is it the Chevalier d'Harmental?"

"Alas, Monseigneur, it is."

The regent's brow became pensive, while Bathilde, seeing the impression produced by her demand, felt her heart beat and her knees tremble.

"Is he your relative, your ally, your friend?"

"He is my life, he is my soul, Monseigneur; I love him."

"But do you know that if I pardon him I must pardon all the rest, and that there are some still more guilty than he is?"

"His life only, Monseigneur; all I ask is that he may live."

"But if I change his sentence to a perpetual imprisonment, you will never see him again. What would become of you then?" asked the regent.

Bathilde was obliged to support herself by the back of a chair.

"I would enter into a convent, where I could pray the rest of my life for you, Monseigneur, and for him."

"That cannot be," said the regent.

"Why not, Monseigneur?"

"Because this very day, this very hour, I have been asked for your hand, and have promised it."

"You have promised my hand, Monseigneur? and to whom?"

"Read," said the regent, taking an open letter from his desk, and presenting it to the young girl.

"Raoul!" cried Bathilde; "Raoul's writing! Oh, *mon Dieu!* what is the meaning of this?"

"Read," repeated the regent.

And in a choking voice Bathilde read the following letter:—

MONSEIGNEUR, — I have deserved death; I know it, and I do not ask you for life. I am ready to die at the day and hour appointed; but it depends on your Highness to make this death sweeter to me. I love a young girl whom I should have married if I had lived; grant that she may be my wife before I die. In leaving her forever alone and friendless in the world, let me at least have the consolation of giving

her the safeguard of my name and fortune. On leaving the church, Monseigneur, I will walk to the scaffold. This is my last wish, my sole desire. Do not refuse the prayer of a dying man.

RAOUL D'HARMENTAL.

"Oh, Monseigneur," said Bathilde, sobbing, "you see that while I thought of him, he thought of me. Am I not right to love him, when he loves me so much?"

"Yes," said the regent, "and I grant his request; it is just. May that favor, as he says it will, sweeten his last moments!"

"Monseigneur," cried the young girl, "is that all you grant him?"

"You see," said the regent, "he is just; he asks nothing else."

"Oh, it is cruel! it is frightful! — to see him again, and lose him at the same moment! His life, Monseigneur, his life, I implore you; and let me never see him again! I prefer that."

"Mademoiselle," said the regent, in a tone which admitted of no reply, and writing some lines on a paper which he sealed, "here is a letter to Monsieur de Launay, the governor of the Bastille; it contains my instructions with regard to the prisoner. My captain of the Guards will go with you, and see that my instructions are followed."

"Oh, his life, Monseigneur! his life! On my knees, and in the name of Heaven, I implore you!"

The regent rang the bell; a valet entered.

"Call Monsieur le Marquis de Lafare," he said.

"Oh, Monseigneur, you are cruel!" said Bathilde, rising. "Permit me, then, to die with him. We will not be separated, even on the scaffold; we will be together, even in the tomb."

"Monsieur de Lafare, accompany Mademoiselle to the Bastille," said the regent. "Here is a letter for Monsieur de Launay; read it with him, and see that the orders it contains are punctually executed."

Then, without listening to Bathilde's last cry of despair, the Duc d'Orléans opened the door of a closet and disappeared.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE MARRIAGE IN EXTREMIS.

LAFARE dragged the young girl away, almost dying, and placed her in one of the carriages always standing in the courtyard of the Palais Royal. While on the way Bathilde did not speak; she was cold, dumb, and inanimate as a statue. Her eyes were fixed and tearless; but on arriving at the fortress, she started. She fancied she had seen in the shade, in the very place where the Chevalier de Rohan was executed, something like a scaffold. A little later a sentinel cried, "*Qui vive?*" the carriage rolled over a drawbridge and drew up at the door of the governor's house. A footman out of livery opened the door, and Lafare gave Bathilde his arm; she could scarcely stand, — all her strength had left her when hope left her. Lafare and the valet were obliged almost to carry her to the first floor. Monsieur de Launay was at supper. They took Bathilde into a room to wait, while Lafare went at once to the governor. Ten minutes passed, during which Bathilde remained, half-dead, in the armchair into which she had fallen on entering the room. The poor girl saw but one thing, — her lover on the scaffold.

At the end of ten minutes Lafare re-entered with the governor. Bathilde looked at them with a bewildered air. Lafare approached her, and offering her his arm, —

"Mademoiselle," said he, "the church is prepared; the priest is ready."

Bathilde rose without replying. She was pale and cold; she felt herself falling, and leaned on the arm which was offered her. Monsieur de Launay went first, lighted by two men bearing torches.

As Bathilde entered by one of the side doors, she saw entering by the other the Chevalier d'Harmental accompanied by Valef and Pompadour. These were his witnesses, as De Launay and Lafare were hers. Each door was kept by two of the French Guard, silent and motionless as statues.

The two lovers advanced, Bathilde pale and fainting, Raoul calm and smiling. On arriving before the altar, the chevalier took Bathilde's hand, and both fell on their knees without having spoken a word.

The altar was lighted only by four wax tapers, which threw a funereal light over the chapel, already dark, and filled with gloomy recollections.

The priest began the ceremony; he was a fine old man with white hair, whose melancholy countenance showed that the daily exercise of his priestly functions left deep traces on his soul. He had been chaplain of the Bastille for five-and-twenty years, and had heard many sad confessions, and beheld many pitiable scenes. He addressed a few words to the two kneeling before him; but instead of speaking to them of their duties as husband and as wife and mother, he spoke of heaven's peace, of the divine pity, and of the eternal resurrection. Bathilde felt that she was suffocating. Raoul, seeing that she was on the point of breaking out into weeping, took her hand and looked at her with a resignation so sad and so profound that the poor child made a last effort and restrained her tears. At the moment of the benediction Bathilde laid her head on Raoul's shoulder; the priest thought she was fainting, and stopped.

"Finish, Father," murmured Bathilde.

The priest pronounced the sacramental words, to which both replied by a "yes" in which seemed to be concentrated the whole strength of their souls.

The ceremony finished, D'Harmental asked Monsieur de Launay if he might spend his few remaining hours with his wife. Monsieur de Launay replied that there was no objection. Raoul embraced Pompadour and Valef, thanked them for having served as witnesses at his marriage, pressed Lafare's hand, thanked Monsieur de Launay for his kindness to him during his imprisonment, and throwing his arm round Bathilde, led her away by the door through which he had entered. When they reached D'Harmental's room, Bathilde could no longer contain her tears; a despairing cry escaped her lips; and she fell weeping on a chair, where doubtless D'Harmental had often sat thinking of her during the three weeks of his captivity. Raoul threw himself at her feet, and tried to console her, but was himself so much moved by her grief that his own tears mingled with hers. That heart of iron melted in its turn, and Bathilde felt at once on her lips the tears and the kisses of her lover.

They had been about half an hour together when they heard steps approaching the door, and a key turning in the lock. Bathilde started, and pressed D'Harmental convulsively against her heart. Raoul understood the dreadful fear which crossed her mind, and reassured her. It could not be what she dreaded, since the execution was fixed for eight o'clock in the morning, and eleven had only just struck.

It was Monsieur de Launay who appeared. "Monsieur le Chevalier," said he, "have the kindness to follow me."

"Alone?" asked D'Harmental, clasping Bathilde in his arms.

"No, with Madame," replied the governor.

"Oh, together, Raoul, together!" cried Bathilde; "where they like, so that we are together. We are ready, Monsieur; we are ready."

Raoul took Bathilde in his arms for a last embrace; then, recalling all his pride, he followed Monsieur de Launay with a face which showed no trace of the terrible emotion he had experienced. They passed through some ill-lighted corridors, descended a spiral staircase, and found themselves at the door of a tower. This door opened into a yard surrounded by high walls, which served as a promenade to those prisoners who were not in secret confinement. In this courtyard was standing a carriage with two horses, on one of which was a postilion; and they saw, shining in the darkness, the cuirasses of a dozen musketeers. A ray of hope crossed the minds of the two lovers. Bathilde had asked the regent to substitute for Raoul's death a perpetual imprisonment. Perhaps the regent had granted him this favor. That carriage, ready, doubtless, to conduct him to some State prison, those musketeers, destined, doubtless, to escort them, gave to the supposition a semblance of reality. They raised their eyes to heaven to thank God for this unexpected happiness. Meanwhile Monsieur de Launay had signed to the carriage to approach; the postilion had obeyed; the door was opened; and the governor, with his head uncovered, held his hand to Bathilde, to assist her into the carriage.

She hesitated an instant, turning uneasily to see that they did not take Raoul away in another direction; but seeing that he was ready to follow her, she got in without resistance. An instant afterward Raoul was sitting by her; the door was closed; and both carriage and escort passed through the gate, over the drawbridge; and they found themselves outside of the Bastille.

They threw themselves into each other's arms; there was no longer any doubt; the regent granted D'Harmental his life, and what was more, consented not to separate him from Bathilde.

This was what Bathilde and D'Harmental had never dared to hope; this life of seclusion — a punishment to many — would be to them a paradise of love. They would see each other continually; they would be always together! What beyond this had they desired for their future, even when they were masters of their own fate? A single sad idea crossed their minds; and both, with the sympathy of hearts who love, pronounced the name of Buvat.

At this moment the carriage stopped; at such a time everything was, for the lovers, a cause of fear. They again trembled, lest they should have given way too much to hope. The door opened; it was the postilion.

"What do you want?" asked D'Harmental.

"I want to know where I am to take you."

"Where you are to take me! Have you no orders?"

"My orders were to take you to the Bois de Vincennes, between the Château and Nogent-sur-Marne, and here we are."

"And where is the escort?" asked D'Harmental.

"Oh, the escort left us at the barrier!"

"Oh, *mon Dieu!*" cried D'Harmental, while Bathilde, panting with hope, clasped her hands in silence, "is it possible?"

The chevalier jumped out of the carriage, looked round him anxiously, and extended his arms to Bathilde, who also alighted; then they uttered together a cry of joy and thankfulness. They were free as the air they breathed; but the regent had ordered that they should be taken to the very place where D'Harmental had car-

ried off Bourguignon, mistaking him for the regent himself.

This was the only revenge of Philippe le Débonnaire.

Four years after this event, Buvat, reinstated in his place, and with his arrears paid, had the satisfaction of placing a pen in the hand of a fine boy three years old. He was the son of Raoul and Bathilde.

The first two names which the child wrote were Albert du Rocher and Clarice Gray. The third was that of Philippe d'Orléans, Regent of France.

POSTSCRIPTUM.

PERHAPS some persons have taken sufficient interest in those who have played a secondary part in our history to wish to know what became of them after the events which defeated the conspiracy and saved the regent. We will satisfy them in a few words.

The Duc and Duchesse du Maine, to whose plots it was determined to put an end, were arrested, — the duke at Sceaux, and the duchess in her house in the Rue St. Honoré. The duke was taken to the château of Doullens, and the duchess to that of Dijon, and afterward to the citadel of Châlons. Both were set at liberty at the end of a few months, disarming the regent, one by an absolute denial, the other by a complete avowal.

Mademoiselle de Launay was conducted to the Bastille, where her captivity, as may be read in the Memoirs she has left, was much lightened by her amours with the Chevalier de Mesnil; and after her release, when lamenting the infidelity of her dear prisoner, she exclaimed more than once, like Ninon or Sophie Arnould, "Oh, the good times when we were so unhappy!"

Richelieu was arrested, as Mademoiselle de Valois had warned him that he would be, the day after that on which he had procured Bathilde's interview with the regent; but his captivity was a new triumph for him. When it was reported that the handsome prisoner had obtained permission to walk on the terrace of the Bastille, the Rue St. Antoine began to be frequented by the most elegant

carriages in Paris, and became in twenty-four hours the fashionable promenade. The regent — who declared that he had proofs of the treason of Monsieur de Richelieu sufficient to lose him four heads if he had them — would not, however, risk his popularity with the fair sex by keeping him long in prison. Richelieu, again at liberty, after a captivity of three months, was more brilliant and more sought after than ever; but the closet had been walled up, and Mademoiselle de Valois had become Duchesse de Modena.

The Abbé Brigaud — arrested, as we have said, at Orléans — was kept for some time in the prison of that town, to the great despair of Madame Denis and her children; but one fine morning, as they were sitting down to breakfast, the abbé entered, as calm as ever. They gave him a boisterous welcome, and plied him with a multitude of questions relating to the details of his adventure; but with his habitual prudence he referred them to his juridical declarations, saying that the affair had already given him so much trouble that they would greatly oblige him by never speaking of it any more. Now, as the Abbé Brigaud was quite an autocrat in Madame Denis's establishment, his desire was religiously respected, and from that day the affair was as completely forgotten in the Rue du Temps-Perdu as if it had never existed.

Some days afterward Pompadour, Valef, Laval, and Malezieux went out of prison in their turn, and began again to pay their court to Madame du Maine as if nothing had happened.

As to the Cardinal de Polignac, he was not even arrested; he was simply exiled to his Abbey d'Anchin.

Lagrange-Chancel, author of the "Philippiques," was summoned to the Palais Royal. He found the regent there, expecting him.

"Monsieur," asked the prince, "have you thought concerning me all that you have said?"

"Yes, Monsieur," replied Lagrange-Chancel.

"Very well; that is very fortunate for you, Monsieur," replied the regent, "for if you had written such infamies against your conscience I would have had you hanged."

The regent sent him to Ste. Marguerite, where he remained only three or four months; for the regent's enemies having spread the report that he had caused Lagrange-Chancel to be poisoned, the prince found no better way to give the lie to that calumny than by opening the prison doors to the alleged deceased, who went forth more than ever swollen with hatred and venom.

This last proof of clemency appeared to Dubois so out of all reason that he came to the regent, intending to make a scene about it; but the regent replied to his complaints only by repeating the refrain of the song which Saint-Simon had made on him:—

"Je suis débonnaire, moi,
Je suis débonnaire."

This enraged Dubois so much that the regent, in order to pacify him, was obliged to transform him into his Eminence the Cardinal.

La Fillon was so puffed up by Dubois's promotion that she declared she would receive from that time forward only those who could trace their noble descent as far back as 1399. It should be said also that her house had lost one of its most illustrious inmates. Three days after the death of Captain Roquefinette, La Normande entered the house of the Filles-Repenties.

THE END.

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